

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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BLACK SHEEP!

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LAND AT LAST," "KISSING THE ROD," &c. &c.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VI. A FIRST APPEAL.

"STEWART," said Harriet Routh to her husband, in a tone of calm, self-possessed inquiry, on the following day, "what has happened? What occurred yesterday, which you had not the courage to face, and deprived yourself of the power of telling me?"

As Harriet asked him this question, she unconsciously assumed her former manner. Something told her that the cause of Routh's conduct, and of the distress of mind which she read in his face, was not connected with the subject that was torturing her. Anything apart from that, any misfortune, any calamity even, might draw them together again; might teach him anew his need of her, her worth to him—she felt some alarm, but it was strangely mingled with satisfaction. The sharp agony she had endured had impaired her faculties so far, had dulled her clear understanding so far, that the proportions of the dangers in her path had changed places, and the first and greatest danger was this stranger—this beautiful, dreadful woman. In that direction was the terrible impotence, the helpless horror of weakness, which is the worst attribute of human suffering; in every other, there was the power to exercise her faculties to rally her presence of mind, to call on her fertility of resource, to act for and with him. With him at her side, and in his cause, Harriet was consciously strong; but from a trouble in which he should be arrayed against her, in which he should be her enemy, she shrank, like a leaf from the shrivelling touch of fire.

She was standing by his side as she asked him the question, in the familiar attitude which she had discarded of late. Her composed figure and pale calm face, the small firm white hand, which touched his shoulder with the steady touch he knew so well, the piercing clear blue eyes, all had the old promise in them, of help that had never failed, of counsel that had never misled. He thought of all these things, he felt all these things, but he no longer thought of, or remembered, or looked for the love which had been their motive and their life. He sat

moodily, his face pale and frowning, one clenched hand upon his knee, the other restlessly drumming upon the table; his eyes were turned away from her, and for some time after she had spoken he kept a sullen silence.

"Tell me, Stewart," she repeated, in a softer voice, while the hand that touched his shoulder moved gently to his neck and clasped it. "I know there is something wrong, very wrong. Tell me what it is."

He turned and looked full at her.

"Do you remember what you said, Harriet, when that letter came from Poynings—what you said about the hydra and its heads?"

"I remember," she answered. Her pale cheek grew paler; but she drew nearer to his side, and her fingers clasped his neck more closely and more tenderly. "I remember. Another head has sprung up, and is menacing you."

"Yes," he said, half fiercely, half wearily. "This cursed thing is never to be escaped nor forgotten, I believe. I can hardly tell you what has happened, Harry, and even you will hardly see your way out of this."

A touch of feeling for her was in his voice. He really did suffer in the anticipation of the shock she would have to sustain.

"Tell me—tell me," she repeated, faintly, and with a quick involuntary closing of her eyes, which would have told a close observer of constant suffering and apprehension.

"Sit down, Harry." He rose as he spoke, placed her in his chair, and stood before her, holding both her hands in his.

"I have found out that the man we knew as Philip Deane was—was Arthur Felton, George Dallas's cousin, the man they are inquiring about, whom they are expecting here."

She did not utter a cry, a groan, or any sort of sound. She shrank into the chair she was sitting in, as if she cowered for life in a hiding-place, her outstretched hands turned cold and clammy in her husband's grasp. Into her widely opened blue eyes a look of unspeakable horror came, and the paleness of her cheeks turned to ashen grey. Stewart Routh, still standing before her holding her hands, looked at her as the ghastly change came over her face, telling—what words could never tell—of the anguish she was suffering, and thought for a moment that she was dying before his face. The breath came from her lips in heavy gasps, and her low white brow was damp with cold sluggish drops.

"Harriet," said Routh—"Harriet, don't give way like this. It's awful—it's worse than anything I ever thought of, or feared. But don't give way like this."

"I am not giving way," she said. Drawing her hands from his hold, she raised them to her head, and held them pressed to her temples while she spoke. "I will not give way. Trust me, as you have done before. This, then, is what I have felt coming nearer and nearer, like a danger in the dark—this—this dreadful truth. It is better known than vague. Tell me how you have discovered it."

He began to walk up and down the room, and she still sat cowering in her chair, her hands pressing her temples, her eyes, with their horror-stricken looks, following him.

"I discovered it by an extraordinary accident. I have not seen much of Dallas, as you know, and I know nothing in particular about Mr. Felton and his son. But there is a lady here—an American widow—who knows Felton well."

"Yes," said Harriet, with distinctness; and now she sat upright in her chair, and her low white brow was knitted over her horror-stricken eyes. "Yes, I have seen her."

"Have you indeed? Ah! well, then, you know who I mean. She and he were great friends—lovers, I fancy," Routh went on, with painful effort; "and when they parted in Paris, it was with an understanding that they were to meet here just about this time. She met George Dallas, and told him, not that, but something which made him understand that information was to be had from her, and she has appointed an interview with Mr. Felton for to-morrow."

"Yes," repeated Harriet, "I understand. When she and he meet, she will tell him his son is coming here. His son will not come. How did you discover what you have discovered?"

He took out of his pocket a large locket like a golden egg, and opened it by touching a spring. It opened lengthwise, and he held it towards Harriet. She looked at one of the photographs which it enclosed, and then, pushing it from her, covered her face with her hands.

"She showed me that yesterday," Routh continued, his throat drier, his voice more hesitating with every word he spoke, "when she told me she was expecting him—and I contrived to secure it."

"For what purpose?" asked Harriet, hoarsely.

"Don't you see, Harriet," he said, earnestly, "that it is quite plain Dallas has never seen a likeness of his cousin, or he must have recognised the face. Evidently Mr. Felton has not one with him. Dallas might not have seen this; but then, on the other hand, he might; and to prevent his seeing it, even for a few hours, until we had time to talk it over, to gain ever so little time, was a great object."

"You took a strange way of gaining time, Stewart," said Harriet. "Had you come home last night in a state to tell me the truth, time would really have been gained. We might have got away this morning."

"Got away!" said Routh. "What do you mean? What good could that do?"

"Can you seriously ask me?" she returned. "Does any other course suggest itself to you?"

"I don't know, Harry. I am bewildered. The shock was so great that the only thing I could think of was to try and forget it for a little. I don't know that I ever in my life deliberately drank for the purpose of confusing my thoughts, or postponing them, before; but I could not help it, Harry. The discovery was so far from any apprehension or fancy I had ever had."

"The time was, Stewart," said Harriet, slowly and with meaning, "when, instead of 'confusing' or 'postponing' any trouble, dread, or difficulty, you would have brought any or all of them to me at once; unhappily for us both, I think that time is past."

He glanced at her sharply and uneasily, and an angry flush passed over his face.

"What cursed folly have you got in your head? Is it not enough that this fresh danger has come down upon me—"

"Upon us, you mean," she interrupted, calmly.

"Well, upon us, then; but you must get up an injured air, and go on with I don't know what folly? Have done with it; this is no time for womanish nonsense—"

"There is so much womanish nonsense about me! There is such reasonableness in your reproach!"

Again he looked angrily at her, as he walked up and down the room with a quicker step. He was uneasy, amazed at the turn she had taken, at the straying of her attention from the tremendous fact he had revealed; but, above and beyond all this, he was afraid of her.

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and said, "Let it drop, let it drop; let me be as unreasonable as you like, and blame me as much as you please, but be truer to yourself, Harriet, to your own helpful nature, than to yield to such fancies now. This is no time for them. We must look things in the face, and act."

"It is not I, but you, who refuse to look things in the face, Stewart. This woman, whom I do not know, who has not sought my acquaintance, whose name you have not once mentioned before me, but who makes you the confidant of her flirtations and her appointments—she is young and beautiful, is she not?"

"What the devil does it matter whether she is or not?" said Routh, fiercely. "I think you are bent on driving me mad. What has come to you? I don't know you in this new character. I tell you, this woman—"

"Mrs. Bembridge," said Harriet, calmly.

"Mrs. Bembridge, then, has been the means of my making a discovery which is of tremendous importance, and thus she has unconsciously saved me from an awful danger."

"By preventing George Dallas from finding out this fact for a little longer?"

"Precisely so. Now I hope you have come to yourself, Harriet, and will talk rationally about this."

"I will," she said, rising from her chair and approaching him. She placed her hands upon his shoulders, and looked at him with a steady, searching look. "We will talk this out, Stewart, and I will not shrink from anything there is to be said about it; but you must hear me then, in my turn. We are not like other people, Stewart, and our life is not like theirs. Only ruin can come of any discord or disunion between us."

Then she quietly turned away and sat down by the window, with her head a little averted from him, waiting for him to speak. Her voice had been low and thrilling as she said those few words, without a tone of anger in it, and yet the callous man to whom they were addressed heard in them something which sounded like the warning or the menace of doom.

"When Dallas knows what we now know, Harriet," said Routh, "he will come to us and tell us his discovery, and then the position of affairs will be that for which we were prepared, if we had not succeeded in inducing him to be silent about Deane's identity."

"Exactly so," said Harriet; "with the additional difficulty of his having concealed his knowledge."

"Yes," said Routh; "but that is *his* affair, not ours. He concealed his knowledge because he was compromised. There is nothing to compromise me. I neglected a public duty, certainly, in favour of a private friendship; but that is a venial offence."

It was wonderful to see how the callousness of the man asserted itself. As he arranged the circumstances, and stated them, he began to regain his accustomed ease of manner.

"It is unfortunate that he should be compromised in this double way, and, of course, there will be a great deal to go through, which will be hard to bear, and not easy to manage; but, after all, the thing is only as bad as it was when Dallas came back. Don't you see that, Harriet?"

"I see that, Stewart, but I also see that he will now have a tenfold interest in finding out the truth. Hitherto he might have been content with clearing himself of suspicion, but now he will be the one person most deeply interested in discovering the truth."

"But how can he discover it?" said Routh; his face darkened, and he dropped his voice still lower. "Harriet, have you forgotten that if there be danger from him, there is also the means of turning that danger on himself? Have you forgotten that I can direct suspicion against him tenfold stronger than any that can arise against me?"

She shivered, and closed her eyes again. "No, I have not forgotten," she said; "but oh, Stewart, it is an awful thing to contemplate—a horrible expedient."

"Yet you arranged it with a good deal of composure, and said very little about its being horrible at the time," said Routh, coarsely. "I hope you are not going to be afflicted with misplaced and ill-timed scruples now. It's rather

late in the day, you know, and you'll have to choose, in that case, between Dallas and me."

She made him no answer.

"The thing is just this," he continued; "Dallas cannot come to any serious grief, I am convinced; but, if the occasion arises, he must be let come to whatever grief there may be—a trial and an acquittal at the worst. The traitor's death, and his mother's recovery, will tell in his favour, though I've no doubt he will supply all the information Evans would have given, of his own accord. I think there is no real risk; but, Harriet, much, very much, depends on you."

"On me, Stewart! How?"

"In this way. When Dallas comes to see you, you must find out whether any other clue to the truth exists; if not, there is time before us. You must keep up the best relations with him, and find out all he is doing. Is it not very odd that he has not mentioned his uncle's solicitude about his son to you?"

"I don't think so, Stewart. I feel instinctively that Mr. Felton dislikes and distrusts us—(what well-founded dislike and distrust it was," she thought, mournfully, with a faint pity for the unconscious father)—"and George knows it, I am sure, and will not talk to me about his uncle's affairs. He is right there; there is delicacy of feeling in George Dallas."

"You seem to understand every turn in his disposition," said Routh, with a sneer.

"There are not many to understand," replied Harriet, simply. "The good and the evil in him are easily found, being superficial. However, we are not talking of his character, but of certain irreparable harm which we must do him, it seems, in addition to that which we have done. Go on with what you were saying."

"I was saying that you must find out what you can, and win his confidence in every way. I shall keep as clear of him as possible, under any circumstances. If the interview of to-morrow goes off without any discovery, there will be a chance of its not being made at all."

"Impossible, Stewart—quite impossible," said Harriet, earnestly. "Do not nourish any such expectation. How long, do you suppose, will Mr. Felton remain content with expecting his son's arrival, and hearing no news of him? How soon will he set inquiries on foot which must end in discovery? Remember, hiding is possible only when there is no one seeking, urged by a strong motive to find. Listen to me, now, in your turn, and listen to me as you used to do, not to cavil at my words, or sneer at them, but to weigh them well. This is a warning to us, Stewart. I don't talk superstition, as you know. I don't believe in any nonsense of the kind; but this I do believe, because experience teaches it, that there are combinations of circumstances in which the wise may read signs and tokens which do not mislead. Here is just such a case. The first misfortune was George's return; it was confirmed by his uncle's arrival; it is capped by this terrible discovery. Stewart, let us be warned and wise in time; let us return to England at once—to-morrow. I

suppose you will have the means of learning the tenor of Mr. Felton's interview with this lady who knew his son so well. If no discovery be then made, let us take it as another indication of luck, circumstance, what you will, and go."

"What for?" said Routh, in amazement. "Are you returning to that notion, when all I have said is to show you that you must not lose sight of Dallas?"

"I know," she said—"I know; but you are altogether wrong. George Dallas must make the discovery some time, and must bear the brunt of the suspicion. I don't speak in his interests, but in yours—in mine. Let it come when it may, but let us be away out of it all. We have money now, Stewart—at least, we are not so poor but that we may make our way in another country—that we may begin another life. Have I ever talked idly, Stewart, or given you evil counsel? No, surely not. In all the years for which you have been all the world to me, I have never spoken vainly; let me not speak vainly now. I might implore, I might entreat," she went on, her eyes now bright with eagerness, and her hands clasped. "I might plead a woman's weakness and natural terror; I might tell you I am not able for the task you dictate to me; but I tell you none of these things. I am able to do and to suffer anything, everything that may or must be done, or suffered for you. I don't even speak of what I *have* suffered; but I say to you, be guided by me in this—yield to me in this. There is a weak spot in our stronghold; there is a flaw in our armour. I know it. I cannot tell, I cannot guess where it is. An instinct tells me that ruin is threatening us, and this is our way of escape. Oh, my husband, listen to me!"

He was standing opposite to her, leaning against an angle of the wall, mingled fury and amazement in his face, but he did not interrupt her by a word or a sign.

"There is no power in me," she went on, "to tell you the strength of my conviction that this is the turning-point in our fate. Let us take the money we have, and go. Why should you stay in England, Stewart, more than in any other country? We have no ties but one another." She looked at him more sharply here, through all her earnestness. "Friendships and the obligations they bring are not for us. The world has no home-bonds for us. Where money is to be made you can live, in such content as you can ever have; and where you are I am as content as I can ever be."

"You are a cheerful counsellor," Routh broke out, in uncontrollable passion. "Do you think I am mad, woman, when I have played so desperate a game, and am winning it so fast, that I should throw up my cards now? Let me hear no more of this. Come to your senses, if you can, and as soon as you can, for I will not stand this sort of thing, I can tell you! I will not leave this place an hour sooner than I intended to leave it. And as to leaving England, if the worst came to pass that could happen, I should hardly be driven to that ex-

tremity. What devil is in you, Harriet, to prompt you to exasperate me, when I looked to you for help?"

"What devil is in *you*," she answered him, rising as she spoke, "that is prompting you to your ruin? What devil, do I say? Words, mere words. What do I know or believe of God, or devil, or any ruling power but the wicked will of men and women, to waylay, and torture, and destroy? The devil of blindness is in you, the devil of wilfulness, the devil of falsehood and ingratitude; and a blacker devil still, I tell you. See that it does not read you, as I read in the old book—for ever closed for me."

Her breast was heaving violently, and her eyes were unnaturally bright, but there was not a ray of colour in her face, and her voice was rapid and unflinching in its utterance. Routh looked at her, and hated her. Hated her, and feared her, and uttered never a word.

"The madness that goes before destruction is coming fast upon you," she said; "I see it none the more clearly because that destruction must involve me too. Let it come; I am ready for it, as I have been ready for any evil for a long time now. You speak idle words to me when you reproach me, Stewart. I am above and beyond reproach from you. I am as wicked a woman, if the definition of good and evil be true, as ever lived upon this earth; but I have been, and am, to you what no good woman could be—and look to it, if you requite me ill. I don't threaten you in saying this—no threats can come from me, nor would any avail—but in your treachery to me, its own punishment will be hidden, ready to spring out upon and destroy you. Scorn my influence, slight my counsel, turn a deaf ear to the words that are inspired by love such as only a wretch like me, with no hope or faith at all in Heaven, and only this hope and faith on Earth, can feel—and see the end."

He stepped forward and was going to speak, but she put out her hand and stopped him.

"Not now. Don't say anything to me, don't ask me anything now. Don't speak words that I must be doomed for ever to remember—for ever to long to forget. Have so much mercy on me, for the sake of the past and for the sake of the present. Ruin is impending over us; if you will, you may escape it; but there is only one way."

She had drawn near the door as she spoke the last words. In another instant she had left him.

Left him in a most unenviable state of bewilderment, rage, and confusion. The emotion which had overpowered him when he had made the discovery of yesterday was almost forgotten in the astonishment with which Harriet's words had filled him. An uneasy sense, which was not anything so wholesome as shame, was over him. What did she know of his late proceedings? Had she watched him? Had any of the gossiping tongues of the place carried the tidings of the beautiful American's openly paraded conquest? No, that could hardly be, for Harriet knew no one at Homburg but George, and

George knew nothing about him. Was he not always with either his mother, or his uncle, or with Harriet herself? Besides, George would not say anything to Harriet that could hurt her. The fellow was a fool and soft-hearted, his quondam friend thought, with much satisfaction. He must set it right with Harriet, however; under any circumstances he must not quarrel with her; in this fresh complication particularly. It could only be a general notion that she had taken, and he must endeavour to remove it; for though he was horribly weary of her, though he hated her at that moment, and felt that he should very likely continue to hate her, even at that moment, and while resolved to disregard her advice, and utterly unmoved by her appeal, he knew he could not afford to lose her aid.

If the beautiful American could have seen the visions of probabilities or possibilities in which she was concerned, that floated through Stewart Routh's mind as he stood gazing out of the window when his wife had left him, she might, perhaps, have felt rather uneasy at the revelation. Mrs. P. Ireton Bembridge was not an adept at reading character, and sometimes, when a disagreeable impression that her new admirer was a man of stronger will and tougher material than she altogether liked to deal with, crossed her mind, she would dismiss it with the reflection that such earnestness was very flattering and very exciting for a time, and the duration of that time was entirely within her choice and discretion.

Stewart Routh stood at the window thinking hurriedly and confusedly of these things. There was a strange fear over him, with all his assurance, with all the security which he affirmed over and over again to himself, and backed up with a resolution which he had determined from the first to conceal from Harriet.

"If my own safety positively demands it," he thought, "Jim's evidence about the note will be useful, and the payment to the landlady will be tolerably conclusive. Dallas told Harriet the initials were A. F. I wonder it never occurred to me at the time."

Presently he heard Harriet's step in the corridor. It paused for a moment at the sitting-room, then passed on, and she went out. She was closely veiled, and did not turn her head towards the window as she went by. Routh drew nearer and watched her, as she walked swiftly away. Then he caught sight of George Dallas approaching the house. He and Harriet met and shook hands, then George turned and walked beside her. They were soon out of sight.

"I don't think I shall see much more of Homburg," George was saying. "My mother has taken an extraordinary longing to get back to Poyning's. Dr. Merle says she must not be opposed in anything not really injurious. She is very anxious I should go with her, and Mr. Carruthers is very kind about it."

"You will go, George, of course?"

"I don't quite know what to do, Mrs. Routh. I don't like to let my mother go without me,

now that things are so well squared; I don't like to persuade her to put off her journey, and yet I feel I ought, if possible, to remain with my uncle until his truant son turns up."

"Has—has nothing been heard of him yet?"

"Not a word. I was awfully frightened about it, though I hid it from my uncle, until I met Mrs. P. Ireton, &c. But though she didn't say much, I could see by her manner it was all right. Bless you, *she* knows all about him, Mrs. Routh. I dare say he'll appear next week, and be very little obliged to us all for providing a family party for him here."

OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

THE WRECK OF THE MEDUSA.

IN that large square room of the Louvre, on one of whose walls Paul Veronese's Marriage of Cana glows like an eternal rainbow, there is hung a fine robust but lurid picture by Jerichau, representing a raft strewn with dead bodies; and, clambering above them, a group of shouting frantic men, surmounted by a negro, who is waving a signal to a distant brig. That picture represents the Wreck of the Medusa, and the story runs that Jerichau painted it in a studio crowded with corpses.

The year after Waterloo, the French government resolved to carry out a project that had been long in embryo, to send out an expedition to its newly restored colony in Senegal. Ever since 1637, the ports of this possession had furnished France with amber, ebony, gum, palm oil, wax, ivory, pepper, and skins of the buffalo and tiger. It was also intended to form, at the same time, a smaller colony at the adjacent Cape Verde. On the 17th of June, 1816, soon after daybreak, the expedition set sail from the roads of the Island of Aix, near Rochefort. There were four vessels: the Medusa, frigate, of 44 guns, Captain Chaumareys; the Echo, corvette, Captain Cornet de Venancourt; the Loire, First Lieutenant Guiquel Destouches; and the Argus, brig, Lieutenant Parnajou. Crowded on the poops, and leaning over the breastworks of these four vessels, stood some four hundred and fifty persons (men, women, and children), taking their last farewell of the Charente coast, of the islands of Rhé and Oleron, and of the dreary sands of Olonne. Persons of half a dozen professions mingled with the crews of sailors and the three companies of soldiers that filled the transports. There were there, hopeful or sad, clerks, artillerymen, and curés, schoolmasters, notaries, surgeons, pilots, gardeners, bakers, engineers, agricultural labourers, naturalists, in all (not reckoning seamen) three hundred and sixty-five persons, of whom two hundred and forty (nearly one-half of them pardoned convicts) were on board the fast-sailing Medusa, the leader of the expedition.

The fresh north wind, that had swept the vessels bravely out of port, changed suddenly, and a south-wester all but drove the Medusa on Les Roches Bonnes, near the Island of Rhé.

Escaping this danger, and doubling Finisterre, Captain Chaumareys outsailed his slow convoy, as he had already expressed his wish and intention of doing. The omens were adverse to the Medusa from the beginning. The crew were undisciplined, the captain careless, reckless, and incompetent. A sailor-boy fell out of a porthole and perished, in spite of the life-buoy thrown out to him, from no gun being ready loaded to signal the nearest vessel. The ship hove to, but too late; the six-oared barge was lowered, with only three men to pull it, and the boy sank. Touching at Teneriffe, to procure wine and oranges, Captain Chaumareys kept his subsequent course dangerously near the coast of the island. On the 29th of June there was another bad omen. Two nights running the frigate caught fire between decks, owing to the gross carelessness of the head baker. Early on the morning of the 10th of July, when off Cape Bayados, the Medusa passed the equator. Old Neptune, of course, instantly hailed the luckless vessel and came on board, and the ceremony of rough shaving and the paying of fines was performed amid wild laughing and buffoon dancing. Captain Chaumareys presided at this noisy buffoonery, and literally throwing the reins on the horses' neck, he let the vessel go almost where it pleased.

At the very height of this saturnalia the officer in command changed the vessel's course, and informed the captain that the Medusa was bearing in upon a reef of enormous rocks, on which the sea, only half a cannon-shot off, could indeed be seen breaking fiercely. More mismanagement that night. The Echo fired two guns and hung out a lantern at her mizen, but the signals were never properly answered. The Medusa had taken a dangerous course—she had gone inside the Canary Islands. She should rather have gone outside, taken a long sweep round, like a carriage when it prepares for turning a corner, and then borne down suddenly straight on Senegal.

There was now great and palpable danger. Every two hours the frigate was brought to, in order to sound; every half-hour the lead was heaved—still always shallows. At last, the water deepening to a hundred fathoms, the captain stood again to the S.S.E., and bore towards the African shore.

The minister of marine's direction to Captain Chaumareys had been imperative not to trust to the charts, but to make W.S.W. instantly after sighting Cape Blanco. On the evening of the 1st of July some of the officers thought they saw the wished-for cape. About six o'clock the captain was called up and shown a bank of mist, which he was easily persuaded was actually the cape. The officers, indeed, thinking the cape had been passed in the night, wished to persuade him that he had obeyed instructions. The great and dreaded reef of Arguin, thirty leagues broad, was ahead; the way to steer now was W.S.W., then turning south to Senegal. The captain, blindly trusting himself to a M. Richefort, an ex-naval officer who had just returned from ten years in an English prison, and

who had once known something of the African seas, resisted all interference, ignored the reef, and at once steered south for Portendie. In vain a young Swiss surgeon, M. Savigny, who had studied Alpine vapours, assured the captain that what he saw was only cloud; while M. Picard, a notary of Senegal, who eight years before had struck on the Arguin reef, also declared that the Medusa was rushing into the very jaws of death.

The evil omens came faster and faster to the wilful man; but all in vain. He was doomed and so was the ship. M. Lapérère, the officer of the morning watch, was disregarded when he found by his reckoning, as well as by soundings, that the ship was very near a reef; and M. Maudet, who succeeded him, when he took the sun's altitude grew very grave, and told M. Richefort, the ignorant and self-appointed pilot, that the reef was then quite close. The captain's adviser merely replied, "Oh, never mind; we're still in eighty fathoms."

M. Maudet sounded; the water grew thicker and browner, fish were numerous, and seaweed floated by in green drifts. Presently the lead showed eighteen fathoms. The captain, in a flurried way, instantly ordered the studding-sail to be taken in, to bring the ship a little more to the wind; the lead then showed only six fathoms—a terribly rapid decrease. "Haul her closer to the wind." Too late. There was hope, with promptitude, at eighteen fathoms, but now none. The tide, too, was at its highest, and would, in a few minutes, begin to decline. A few seconds more and the startled ship luffed, gave a heel, went on, heeled again and again, and stopped. The Medusa, at a quarter-past three on the 2nd of July, struck on the west edge of the dreaded Arguin reef, off the great African desert, nineteen degrees thirty-six minutes north latitude, nineteen degrees forty-five minutes west longitude.

The ill-disciplined crew fell into a despair as instantaneous as it was cowardly and unworthy. Two ladies, Madame and Mademoiselle Chemals, wife and daughter of the governor, alone remained calm and unmoved, while veterans of Napoleon, and old sailors tried in a thousand storms, screamed and shrieked like terrified madmen; others remained as if paralysed, thunderstruck, or chained to the deck, hopeless, speechless, powerless. Every countenance changed; the features of many absolutely shrank and grew hideously contracted and deformed till the first stupefaction of instantaneous and overwhelming terror passed away. The Frenchmen broke into wailing or into curses at the pseudo-pilot; and an officer who came upon deck said to the cause of this misfortune:

"See, monsieur, what your obstinacy has done. You know I warned you."

All that day the sailors worked with the fury of despair. The sails were lowered, the top-gallant-mast taken down, and everything prepared to get the Medusa off the reef. The next day the topmasts were taken off and the

yards lowered, while the men heaved at an anchor a cable's length off, but both this and the bower-anchor proved too weak, and could retain no hold of the sand and grey shell-sprinkled mud. The water-butts in the hold were then staved in vain, and the topmasts, yards, and booms thrown overboard to lighten the vessel.

The loss of the *Medusa* seeming imminent, and the six boats being incapable of holding four hundred persons, the governor, leaning on the capstan-head, sketched a very feasible plan of saving all hands. He ordered a raft to be instantly constructed, large enough to hold all the provisions and two hundred men. At the hours of meals the boats' crews were to meet at the raft to receive their rations. Boats and raft were to proceed together to the shore, and an armed caravan was then to be organised to push through the desert towards the island of St. Louis. The plan was well laid, but it was defeated by the indecision and cowardice of the officers, and the mutinous restlessness of the soldiers, sailors, and civilians.

The next day, the 4th, adverse currents, rising sea, and violent wind, rendered all attempts to fix anchors or carry out warps useless. The despairing men continued, however, to work at the raft, and threw many of the flour-barrels and powder-barrels overboard. In the evening, just before high water, the sailors set to with a will at the capstan. To the delight of all, the frigate at last slowly moved to the larboard, then swung perceptibly, and at last turned her head to the open sea. They were all but saved. Every one was sanguine. The *Medusa* was out of her grave-like bed, she was all but afloat; only her stern touched the sand. Nothing remained now but to haul at her with more ropes, to throw over all the remaining flour-barrels and the fourteen twenty-four-pounders. Yet all was imbecility and irresolution. The governor, knowing the scarcity of food at Senegal, was reluctant to sacrifice the flour; the captain hoped for a calm night, to send out more cables on which to haul. The opportunity was lost for ever. The tide ebbed. The frigate wallowed again, and deeper, into the sucking sand.

At night, the wind blew furiously on the shore. The sea beat high and threatening. The frigate rolled more and more hopelessly under every blow. No one slept, for the *Medusa* threatened every moment to founder or break in sunder. At last, the death-blow came; there was a quivering, a crash, and the keel was shattered in two. The ship bulged; the helm was unshipped; the broken keel, dashing against the poop, beat in the captain's cabin, and let in the sea through a dangerous breach. The men had no confidence in their officers—how could they? About eleven o'clock the soldiers seized their arms, and took possession of various parts of the vessel, a report having been spread among them that the sailors were going to escape in the boats, and leave them to perish on board the frigate. The presence of the governor and his staff at last allayed their fears. In the midst of

this confusion and danger the raft broke loose, and, drifting to sea, was with difficulty recovered. At three o'clock in the morning, the master caulker informed the captain, with a desponding face, that the vessel was filling fast. The pumps would not work, the hull was split, the frigate threatened to heel over; it was necessary to desert her at once.

Biscuit from the store-room was instantly placed in strong barrels, and casks were filled with wine and fresh water; but most of these were thrown overboard or left behind in the confusion and disorderly excitement. A list had been previously drawn up, assigning to each man his special boat and peculiar duty; but, in the tumult, no one obeyed orders. The moment to embark arrived. The soldiers descended first on the raft, leaving their muskets in the ship, and retaining only their sabres and a few carbines; the officers, however, kept their fowling-pieces and pistols. There were one hundred and twenty soldiers and officers; besides these, twenty-nine sailors and passengers and one sutler woman. The large fourteen-oared barge took off the governor, his family, and thirty-two other persons; a second large boat received forty-two, and the captain's barge twenty-eight men. The long boat, by no means sound and almost without oars, held eighty-eight persons; an eight-oared boat took twenty-five sailors; and the smallest boat had on board fifteen persons, including four ladies and four children. Several men, either already drunk or afraid of the overcrowded boats, refused to leave the vessel.

The long hours of suspense upon the reef had demoralised the crew of the *Medusa*. Most men in sudden and unusual danger are little better than sheep; but these men ran about with the insane terror of frightened chickens. There was no one to lead them or to drive them; no one to animate their faint hearts, or rally their scattered senses. Some rushed to the gangway and the ladders; others dropped from the main-chains, or flung themselves headlong into the sea.

About seven o'clock, four of the boats put eagerly to sea, the raft being still moored alongside of the frigate. When the order came to let the raft go, M. Corréard, a brave young engineer, who was still cool and firm, unable to move through the crowd of soldiers that surrounded him, called to one of the officers on board the barge, into which the governor was just then being lowered in his arm-chair, that he would not start until they were supplied on the raft with instruments and charts, in case of getting separated from the boats. The officer replied they were provided with every necessary, and he was coming on board in a moment to command them. M. Corréard saw that man no more; for he sought his own safety on board one of the boats which were joined by tow-ropes. The base captain also pushed off in his own barge and deserted the vessel, leaving eighty men in the wreck; who, uttering cries of rage and despair, were with difficulty prevented from

firing on their runaway captain. Lieutenant Espiau and M. Bredif, another engineer, returned for them with great difficulty in the leaky long boat, and rescued all but seventeen, who preferred waiting till assistance could be sent them from Senegal. The French flag was then hoisted on the wreck, the unfortunates were left to perish, and the boats got into line, led by the captain's barge, which was preceded by the pin-nace. The hundred and fifty men crowded on the raft broke into excited cries of "Vive le roi!" and a little white flag was hoisted on a soldier's musket. There was a pretence of order, but it was really only a selfish and cowardly scramble to land. The raft was cumbrous and slow. Eh bien! they would desert the raft, and leave its crew to perish. There was no irresolution about the cowards now.

Espiau, finding the long boat crazy, leaky, almost unmanageable, asked the officers of each of the boats by turns to relieve him of some twenty men. Lieutenant Maudet, of the third boat, fearing a collision, in his despair, especially as his own craft was slight and patched, let go the tow-rope. The captain made no effort to recover the rope or preserve the line, but hurried on his rowers. The governor seeing this—being by no means a candidate for martyrdom and two leagues from the frigate—resolved to let the raft go. Then arose a cry of "Let's leave them." An officer kept every moment crying, "Shall I let go?" M. Clanet, a paymaster, resisted; but the rope was eventually let go, and the raft remained alone and helpless.

The despairing crowd on the raft could not at first believe that they were so ruthlessly deserted. It was thought that the boats had only parted in order to hasten to some vessel that had been seen on the horizon. The long boat, too, was still to leeward; she lowered her foresail, as if going to take up the tow-rope; but all at once she tacked, then slowly hoisted her sails and followed the division.

In fact, brave M. Espiau had urged the sailors to rejoin the raft, but they feared that the people on the raft would attack them. Finding the other boat would not join him, M. Espiau at last reluctantly set sail, exclaiming:

"We shall sink, but let us show courage to the last. Let us do what we can. Vive le roi!"

This cry spread from boat to boat, but not one turned to save the men on the raft, who, frantic at the desertion, which, in their rage, they believed to be premeditated, swore that they would cut to pieces whoever they overtook. Thirst and famine, pestilence and death, hovered over those miserable and doomed men; terror in the sea, terror in the burning sky. The soldiers and sailors were either petrified with despair or maddened with fear. The officers alone preserved an outward fortitude, and by degrees partially calmed or consoled the herd of howling, base, and frantic creatures.

Let us describe the floating grave which these panic-stricken men had so clumsily constructed. It was twenty metres long and seven

broad, but was so flimsy that only the centre could be relied upon for safety, and on this space there was barely *standing* room for fifteen men. It had neither sails nor a mast. It was composed of the Medusa's masts, poles, boom, and yards. The groundwork and the sides were solid, and strongly lashed and bound together; on these supports were nailed crossboards, and on the sides there was a low breastwork. The head of this lattice-work raft was formed by two top-gallant yards, which crossed each other. The angular space thus formed was crossed by slight planks, and was continually submerged. The raft had, before starting, been used as a *dépôt* for the flour barrels. There had also been placed on it six barrels of wine and two small casks of water. But the first fifty men, finding the raft sink seventy centimetres, threw over all the flour barrels, and let them drift away with their store of life. Even when thus lightened, the raft at the head and the stern, when the hundred and fifty men had all embarked, was still three feet under water. At the moment of putting off, a man threw down to the raft a bag with twenty-five pounds of biscuit. It fell into the sea, but the briny paste was preserved, and with the casks carefully lashed to the crossbeams of the raft.

The commander of these unhappy people was M. Coudin, "an aspirant of the first class," to use a term of the French navy. He had injured his leg while in the Aix roads, and the salt water distressed the wound; but, being the oldest officer of his class on board the Medusa, he had refused to relinquish his dangerous post. His noblest coadjutor was M. Corréard, the engineer, who had been ordered to the boats, but refused to leave his twelve workmen who were on the raft. M. Savigny, the young Swiss surgeon, was also very generous in his devotion to save these unworthy men. Only two military officers had deserted their soldiers. A captain had been ordered, with thirty-six soldiers, to fire on any who should desert the raft, but he resisted his men when they began to load; the other, Lieutenant Danglas, forsook the raft, and then threatened to fire at the governor and captain, who in their turn deserted him and left him on the wreck.

The first inquiry of the abandoned men was for the charts, anchor, and compass, which they had been told had been left for them. Cries of horror and rage ran through the group of half-famished men when they found that neither compass nor chart was there. All at once, M. Corréard remembered that one of his workmen carried a small compass about the size of a crown-piece, and there was a smile of joy among these mobile people at the discovery. A few hours after, they lost it between the interstices of the raft, and had only the sun to guide them. Having left the frigate without a meal (another fatal oversight), and having for several days had no regular food, the biscuit paste, to the last mouthful, was now mixed with wine and distributed to the men, with a pint of wine each.

The crew had not yet lost all hope. The officers spoke of safety as certain, and the sailors nourished the thought of revenge against those who had so cruelly deserted them, and whom they loaded with imprecations.

M. Coudin being unable to move, M. Savigny, the young surgeon, directed the men to erect a mast on the front of the raft, and to make shrouds and stays from a tow-rope. The sail trimmed well, but was of use only when the wind came from behind. The raft kept always in a cross position, probably from the excessive length of its cross-pieces. In the evening, every one on board prayed hopefully to Heaven for help out of that imminent danger. The universal belief was that the governor, once safe on the Island of Arguin, would the next day return to their assistance. Night came, the wind freshened, and the sea rose cruel and threatening. The raft rode a mere chip upon the inkly waves. M. Savigny, retaining his presence of mind, fastened ropes to the bulwarks for the soldiers and the more helpless of the landsmen to hold on by when the great washing waves came breaking in on them. About midnight the sea grew more mountainous, and the shrinking soldiers were lifted from the raft at every wave. To add to the horror, the night was peculiarly dark, and the sky seemed to press down on them like a low roof of black marble. At one time, the foam of the breakers gleamed so white and phosphorescent, that the sailors, in their heated imagination, mistook it for a distant fire; and having some powder and pistols hanging to the mast, they flashed them repeatedly, till they discovered their error. Those who clung to the ropes were dashed to and fro upon the raft, and fifteen or sixteen perished unobserved. Till daybreak, nothing was heard, through the roaring of the sea and wind, but cries and groans, prayers, farewells, adjurations and vows to God.

At daybreak, the sea somewhat subsided, and the wind, as if exhausted by its own rage, lulled itself to more calmness. The sickly light showed ten or twelve poor creatures, who, entangled in the lattice-work of the raft, had broken their limbs and perished miserably. When the roll-call was made, there were nearly twenty men missing. The sea, the storm, had claimed their earliest victims, and the survivors envied them the rest of death. Amidst these horrors that sometimes harden men, the survivors shed tears at witnessing the joy of two young men who, discovering their aged father trampled and senseless under the feet of the soldiers, had by the most assiduous care restored him to life, and were now clasping him in their arms. At this very time two lads and a baker took solemn farewell of their companions, and, throwing themselves into the sea, instantly perished. Already the minds of many of the men began to fail, and, with loud cries, some shouted that they saw land, and vessels coming to their help. As the day grew fine and sunny, they were tranquilly expecting every hour to see the boats flying to their succour. As night drew on, a

deeper despair again weighed upon them. The soldiers grew mutinous, and yelled with fury at their helpless officers. When night came, the sky grew murky, the wind rose in fresh fury, and the sea, swelling mountains high, drove the raft forward at an incredible speed. Almost all who could not fight their way to the centre of the raft, the more solid part, were swept away by the waves, which broke fore and aft. In the centre many were trodden to death in the crowd. The officers clustered round the mast, crying out to the men to move to this side or that, when the raft, hanging almost perpendicularly on the waves, required a counterbalance to prevent it falling over, like a rearing and maddened horse.

The soldiers and sailors now abandoned all hope. They wished only to die drunk, and so escape the last pangs. They broke a large hole in a cask in the centre of the raft, and filling their tin cups, drank till the salt water washed in and spoiled the remainder of the wine. Crazed with hunger, fear, and drink, the men broke out into open mutiny, and swore they would butcher their officers because they would not agree to destroy the raft. The cry now was to cut the rope and let all drown at once and together. A Malay soldier, a giant of a man, with short crisp hair, sallow complexion, and a hideous distorted face, threatened to kill an officer, struck down every man who opposed him with his fist, and, fiercely waving a boarding hatchet, began to hew at the ropes that bound the edge of the raft. He was instantly killed with one blow of a sabre. The subaltern officers and passengers flew to arms. The mutineers, gathering in the dim moonlight, drew their sabres and got ready their knives. These madmen were chiefly branded galley-slaves from Toulon, Brest, and Rochefort, the scum of all countries—the sweepings of French prisons, sent to perish in Africa. They had neither courage nor endurance; they only wished to murder their commanders, pay off old scores, and roll drunk into the sea. The officers were only twenty, and they had to face more than a hundred of those mad wolves. The first mutineer who lifted a sword was instantly run through the body. This awed the soldiers for a moment, and they retreated to the back of the raft. Seeing one of the villains cutting the ropes with his knife, the officers rushed on him and threw both him and a soldier, who tried to defend him, overboard. The *mêlée* then became general. A mutineer cried, "Lower the sail!" and, cutting the shrouds and stays, threw down the mast, which felled one of their assailants, whom they then threw into the sea. Rescued by his friends, the mutineers again seized him, and were going to cut out his eyes with a penknife. Exasperated at this cruelty, the officers and passengers charged the wretches furiously, and cut down savagely all who resisted.

M. Corréard, the engineer, roused from a sort of trance by the curses of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the cries of "Aux armes!" "À nous, camarades!" "Nous sommes

perdus," leaped up, drew his sabre, assembled his armed workmen, and remaining at the front of the raft, stood on the defensive. Every moment they were charged by drunken mutineers armed with clubbed carbines, sabres, knives, and bayonets. The men thrown overboard also swam round, and clambering over the front of the raft attacked them in the rear.

One of the workmen, named Dominique, joining the rebels, was knocked overboard; but M. Corréard, hearing his voice over the side, dragged him up by the hair of his head, and bound up a large sabre-wound on his head. This wretch, the moment he had recovered, returned to the mutineers, and was struck dead in a subsequent charge. Such were the monsters of which the African battalion was composed, and it is difficult to lament their fate. Hearing cries and screams from the waves, M. Corréard found that the mutineers had flung the sutler and her husband into the sea, where they were frantically invoking the aid of Our Lady of Laux (department of Upper Alps). Fastened to a rope, M. Corréard rescued the woman, while an artilleryman saved her husband. The grateful woman instantly gave her preserver all that she had in the world—a little parcel of snuff, which M. Corréard presented to a sailor, who subsisted on it for four days. The soldier and his wife could hardly believe their senses when they found themselves once more safe in each other's arms.

"Save me, for I am useful," the delighted, garrulous woman said to the workmen. "I was in all the Italian campaigns; I followed the grand army twenty-four years; I braved death; I helped the wounded; I brought them brandy, whether they had money or not. In battle I generally lost some debtors, but then the survivors paid me double; so I, too, shared every victory."

After that rough check the mutineers lost heart, and, throwing themselves at the officers' feet, asked and received pardon. At midnight, however, they broke out again, charging savagely at the officers who stood armed round the mast. The soldiers who had no arms bit the officers, and tore them with their teeth. If they got a man down, they beat him with their sabres and carbines. Sous-Lieutenant Lozach, who had served with the Vendéans under St. Pol de Léon, and was therefore obnoxious to the troops, was with difficulty rescued from their cruel hands, as they dragged him to the side. Their cry was constantly for the head of Lieutenant Danguas, who had been harsh with them when in garrison in the Isle of Rhé. They could not be persuaded that he was with the boats. They then seized M. Coudin, who held a boy in his arms, and flung them both overboard. M. Coudin, though wounded, was saved.

M. Savigny has left on record his feelings at this time. An irresistible lethargy came, during which the most beautiful wooded country, and scenes delightful to the senses, passed before his mind. If such torpor was not resisted, men became furious, or calmly drowned themselves, saying "they were going for assistance, and

would soon return." At times a soldier would rush at his comrades with his sabre drawn, and demand bread or the wing of a fowl; others called for their hammocks, saying they wanted to go between decks and get some sleep. Many believed they saw ships passing, and hailed them; others described a harbour and a magnificent city, which seemed to rise in the air. M. Corréard fancied himself travelling across the plains of Lombardy. One of the officers said to him, gravely, "I know, Corréard, that the boats have deserted us; but never fear. I have just written to the governor, and in a few hours it will be all right." M. Corréard replied in good faith, and asked if he had a carrier-pigeon to take the message. The moment the fighting ceased, the men sank again into these semitrances, and when they awoke in the morning regarded the combats as nightmare dreams. With the daylight the unhappy men grew calmer; but the terror always rose up again in the darkness.

When day broke, it was found that upwards of sixty men had perished in the mutiny; about a fourth of these having drowned themselves in paroxysms of despair. Two of the loyal side had perished, but neither of them was an officer. Sobered by fatigue, the soldiers, shedding tears, loudly bewailed their fate after the demonstrative French manner. A new misfortune had happened. In spite of all the struggles of the officers, the mutineers during the night had thrown into the sea two barrels of wine and the only two kegs of water. There was only one cask of wine left for the sixty survivors; they at once, therefore, put themselves on half allowance.

The sea had now grown calm, and the mast was once more raised. Some of the practised sailors thought they saw a line of desert shore glittering in the distance, and tried to believe they felt the hot breath of the adjacent Sahara; but the sail was now spread to every wind, so the raft alternately approached and receded from the land. The soldiers, fainting with fatigue and the relapse from their drunken fury, still groaned out their execrations at their officers, whom they accused as the cause of their tortures. The officers, though now forty-eight hours without food, were upheld by their higher moral feeling, and held up bravely. They collected tags from their men, and bent them into hooks for fishing; but the current carried them under the raft, and there they got entangled and lost. They then twisted a bayonet into a hook, but a shark bit at it and straightened it. All was useless.

Suddenly the horrible impulse of cannibalism seized the more degraded of the soldiers (it is with pity as much as indignation that we record this horror). They instantly leaped on the dead bodies that strewed the raft, cut off lumps of flesh, and devoured them voraciously. Many (especially the officers) refused to share in this unnatural meal, and still bore up, subsisting on a larger portion of wine. The men, feeling stronger after their cruel meal, set to work and dried the

remaining human flesh to render it less revolting; the rest chewed at their sword-belts and cartridge-boxes, or ate pieces of their shirts and the linings of their hats, the epicures especially selecting those that were greasy.

The fourth morning's sun showed ten or twelve more dead men, and the survivors wept as they lowered them into the sea, reserving one only for food.

The day was fine, the sunshine diffused calmness in every heart, and a faint ray of hope spread over the pale and haggard faces. God heard their prayers. About four in the afternoon a large shoal of flying-fish got entangled under the raft. The men caught nearly two hundred, eating the milt at once, and storing the rest in a cask; but these fish were much smaller than herrings, and one man alone, in his raging hunger, could have eaten half the shoal. The first impulse of the men (the galley-slaves had nearly all been given to the sword and the waves) was to thank God for this goodness.

Having dried an ounce of gunpowder in the sun, and discovered a parcel with steel, gun, and tinder, the soldiers made a fire in a cask, and cooked some fish, adding to it portions of human flesh, which proved less disgusting when dressed, to eke out the meal. The officers ate human flesh that day for the first time, and from that time continued to eat it. Unfortunately, the barrel caught fire, and powder and tinder were all destroyed. No more food could be cooked after this. That night the officers, feeling stronger, were more tranquil, and slept better; but, as if Satan himself was on board inventing new torments, that night there was a fresh revolt and a second massacre. The dregs had still to be drawn off, the dross still to be purged in the purgatorial furnace of suffering.

A Piedmontese sergeant, who had stolen the wine which he had been entrusted to guard, had plotted with some Spaniards, Italians, and negroes to throw the officers into the sea during the night. The negroes, tempted by a bag containing some valuables and fifteen hundred francs, which was hung on the mast, had persuaded these wretches that once on land they could guide them to a place of safety. The sailors, remaining faithful, betrayed the plot. A Spaniard, clutching the mast, crossed himself with one hand, and drew his knife with the other. The sailors threw this man into the sea. An officer's servant, an Italian, seeing this, snatched up a boarding-axe, wrapped himself in some canvas, and threw himself into the sea. The mutineers rushed forward to avenge their comrades, and a desperate and savage fight ensued. The raft again streamed with blood, and was strewn with dead bodies. The soldiers shrieked for the head of Lieutenant Danglas, and a second time threw the sutler woman into the sea, from whence M. Coudin again rescued her. At last the mutineers were driven back, and the officers sank, almost instantaneously, into a fitful sleep.

The fifth daybreak rose on only thirty men,

bruised, wounded wretches, crying out with pain as the salt water inflamed their wounds. Not more than twenty could stand or walk. There were only a dozen fish now left, and wine enough for four days. Beyond that time none of the crew could expect to live. That day two soldiers, discovered sucking wine from the cask, were instantly thrown into the sea, as had been before decreed. Soon after this a soldier's boy, a beautiful, brave lad, who had been the pet of the regiment, went mad, ran to and fro calling for his mother and for food and water, and eventually expired in the arms of M. Coudin.

There were now only twenty-seven survivors; of these all but fifteen were covered with wounds, and were delirious. The sutler had broken her thigh, and her husband was wounded in the head. The dying men still lingered on half allowance, and it was calculated they would consume forty bottles of wine. After a debate, at once terrible and revolting, it was resolved to throw these wounded people into the sea. Three sailors and a soldier were the selected executioners. Their companions hid their faces and wept as the cruel work went on.

We, who have not suffered in such scenes, must not wonder at hearts turning to stone in the midst of such calamities. The deed done, all arms were thrown overboard except one sabre, which could be used to cut a rope or hew a spar.

On the ninth day, a small white butterfly appeared, to the joy of every one, fluttering over the raft, then settling on the sail. Some of the soldiers watched it with feverish eyes, and would have fought for it as food had not the rest declared that they would protect it, for it was an omen of God's intended mercy. On the following day, they saw more butterflies and some sea-birds, that they tried in vain to allure. The next day they raised a rude platform on the centre of the raft, over which the sea broke, but not often or violently. The men who still lived resolved at last to meet death with resignation; a lingering hope and faith still buoyed them up. The older soldiers, who had fought under Napoleon, to beguile the time related their adventures; the intrepid Lavillette, the artillery sergeant, being the foremost of these raconteurs.

The sun had now grown intolerably burning, the heat redoubling the thirst that consumed these poor men. They fought and quarrelled for shares in a lemon, some cloves of garlic, some spiced tooth-liquid which had been found by chance. Many of the sailors kept their hats full of sea-water, and splashed their hair, faces, and hands repeatedly with it; others kept pieces of pewter in their mouths; one or two took their wine through a quill. A small quantity of wine now produced intoxication.

The tenth day five men declared their intention of drowning themselves when drunk. The officers did all they could to dissuade them, and fresh butchery was about to commence, when a shoal of sharks surrounded the raft, and diverted the wretches' minds from their suicidal purpose.

Lavillette struck at these hideous and threatening monsters with the remaining sabre; but the most furious blows only drove them back into the sea for a few moments.

Three days more of inexpressible anguish, and many of the men, careless of life, even bathed in sight of the sharks, or, to lessen their thirst, stood naked on the front of the raft where the waves broke. Sometimes great numbers of polypi were driven on the raft, and their long prickly arms clinging to the naked men, caused them horrible pain before they could be flung off. Still there was hope; and one man, actually joking, said, with irrepressible French gaiety:

"If the brig is sent to look for us, God grant her the eyes of an Argus."

Thinking land near, eight of the more determined men resolved to build a small raft and row in search of shore. They nailed boards across a part of a spar, and fixed a small mast and sail, but the raft was found crazy and dangerous, and the builders let it drift away. There were now only twelve or fifteen bottles of wine left. An invincible loathing of human flesh at last seized the sufferers. The sun rose without clouds, pure and bright. The survivors had prayed and divided the wine, when a captain of infantry, looking towards the horizon, suddenly descried a ship. There was a shout of irrepressible joy. A vessel was seen, but at so great a distance that only the tips of the masts were visible. The joy was convulsive and passionate. They returned thanks to God with one voice; but their hope was still alloyed with fear. They straightened cask hoops, and tied to them handkerchiefs of different colours; these were waved from the top of the mast by one man, aided by others. Some thought the ship grew larger; others, that it receded. All at once it disappeared. The men, then struck down with the profoundest despair, lay down to die under a rude tent made of old sails, proposing to write a short detail of their sufferings on a board, sign it with their names, and fasten it to the top of the mast.

After two hours of this last agony, the master gunner, suddenly looking feebly out of the hut, uttered a shout, then held his breath, and stretched his hands towards the sea. All he said was, "Saved! the brig is close on us." Yes, the brig, with her great white wings spread, was bearing down full on them. Then the sailors, soldiers, and officers embraced each other and wept for joy, and even the wounded men crawled out to see the messenger of God. Every one of the fifteen haggard, hollow-eyed, long-bearded men, sun-scorched, delirious, almost naked, waved signals as the well-known brig, the Argus, flew rapidly before the wind, and hoisted the great white flag of France, the crew standing in the shrouds waving their hats in joyful welcome. Of the one hundred and fifty persons left on the raft only fifteen remained, and of these five perished of fatigue shortly after reaching St. Louis.

Of the cowardly rascals in the boats, it is waste of time to say much. They reached the coast,

and made their way through the desert to Senegal, suffering by the way, and fighting, praying, and uttering lamentations and adjurations in their previous manner. Of the seventeen men left in the Medusa, twelve perished on a raft on which they tried to reach the shore. Three men only were found alive. Each of these lived apart in a separate corner of the vessel; never meeting his companions but to fight over the provisions.

The almost incredible sufferings of the crew of the Medusa (the record of which reads like a dark page from the *Inferno*) created a profound sensation in Europe. Subscriptions were raised for the survivors, both in Paris and London.

Among those who showed kindness to M. Corréard, one of the most meritorious of the survivors, was a countryman of our own, Major Peddy, the successor of Mungo Park in his African expedition; but the French government never forgave M. Corréard for writing, in conjunction with M. Savigny, an account of the wreck that exposed the incompetence, baseness, and criminal carelessness which had occasioned the loss of the Medusa.

LONDON FIRES.

"It's getting near quarter-day, you see, and fires come round as regularly as the tax-collector!" said a literary gentleman, whose acquaintance I made in a parish board-room, and whose course of public duty leads him to observe fires, inquests, casual wards, and parochial bear-gardens. We were standing under the shadow of St. Dunstan's church; his text was the red monster which had just torn by, steaming, glaring, and yelling; and the "Hi! hi! hi!" of the helmeted figures forming its back, and the hard clasp of its hoofed feet, had interrupted us in the midst of a philosophic comparison between the recent defamatory brawlings of the poor-law guardians of Bethnal-green and the equally recent pugilistic encounter between the vestrymen of Clerkenwell.

"Fires," my friend repeated sententiously, "are the easiest way of paying rent, and the insurance companies are very kind, and not over-particular, so that a man has only to manage cleverly to make a good burn-out serve his turn remarkably. They don't like asking too many questions, you see; for it gives an office a bad name to do that; and where there's so much competition for policies, it's better to pay a claim smilingly than to spend money in advertisements."

This cynical view of the pursuits and speculations of the London householder, as well as the expediency-worship of the insurance offices, I have since found to be unsupported by facts. Fires are not especially numerous during the weeks preceding quarter-day, and, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, arson is a comparatively rare offence. The returns of foreign capitals do, it is true, show a smaller per-centage of disaster by fire in proportion to population

than London, but this can be accounted for in two ways: first, the vastly greater wealth of the combustible material stored in the wharves, warehouses, and dwellings of our own metropolis; secondly, the superior accuracy of our official returns. Here every "alarm" is recorded, and it is rarely indeed that the most trivial fire takes place without the word being passed and the call made at one of the Metropolitan Fire-Brigade stations. Printed returns are circulated every day, of the "alarms" raised during the preceding twenty-four hours, and "a pair of stockings and two shirts scorched while hanging up to dry," "wainscot of front room slightly damaged, and flooring burnt," "glass cracked, and chimney ornaments injured by smoke," may be taken as samples of their minor entries. But if any reader wishes to convince himself effectually of the comparative infrequency of long continuous fires, let me advise him to devote himself to their personal study, and to give up his days and nights to attending them as an amateur. Assuming him to have every facility afforded him to be made free of the different fire-stations, and to become on terms of familiar intimacy with the firemen, he will yet, unless he be more favoured than the present writer, have to go through many long hours of weary and fruitless watching, be called out and "stopped," receive summonses and counter-summonses, attend fires which literally end in smoke, and very little of it, and be on the point of giving the quest up in despair, before he succeeds in facing a really powerful blaze, and observing the brigade at work upon it. For the appliances for putting out fires are so much more effectual than formerly, that it frequently happens that within half an hour after the first alarm is given the fire is out, and there is nothing but the soaked and smouldering timbers, the thrice-baked crumbling bricks, and the firemen left to watch it, to tell its recent whereabouts. Thus it is that waiting for an opportunity of being present from the commencement to the termination of an important fire is a more tedious business than might be supposed.

Take a night at King-street, Regent-street, as an example. A foreman's station this, in direct telegraphic communication with the chief office at Watling-street, as well as with the tributary stations in its own district. Time, nine in the evening; scene, a small back room, with firemen smoking and chatting amicably, those with belts on being ready for active duty. A sluggish-looking clock and the telegraphic dial-plates the most prominent articles in the room; lanterns, helmets, axes, and a printed list of rules its chief ornaments. An open door looking through the front apartment, where the engines stand ready for action, a window of singular powers of draught opposite the door, an unpolished deal table recently finished by some of the men, a corner-cupboard holding files of old official papers, and a fire which we all mend and stir by turns, its leading features. I find waiting here a gentleman of ample means and considerable scientific acquirements, who is the only visitor

besides myself, and I'm bound to say that by no stretch of politeness could either of us be called entertaining company. We have both "come for a job," that is, on the chance of a "call" coming, and our being taken on the engine to a fire, and our conversation is in consequence both limited and spasmodic. The least noise in the outer chamber, the slightest stir among the patient watchers at our side, makes us start hopefully and lose the thread of our forced talk. The clock ticks on with dull monotony until the warning for the stroke of ten comes upon us suddenly, and inspires false hope. Once, too, the telegraphic bell rings, and our hearts are filled with anticipatory joy. I inwardly resolve that in case there should be only room for one stranger on the engine, that I will be that one, and I mentally gauge my fellow-watcher's strength and agility with my own. Is it a great fire? will lives be endangered? shall I see men and women brought out of bedroom windows by the fire-escape? will the firemen cheer each other on to deeds of valour, as at the play? are the problems I put to myself as the needle darts round the dial-plate, and the fireman reads its message off.

"Not an alarm at all, sir, this ain't; only saying that one of our men may have leave to-morrow, which it's his aunt's funeral," plunges us into an abyss of disappointment, and humanises me to the extent of thinking that, after all, I would have tried hard to make room on the engine for the other stranger too. "Don't seem as if we was going to have an alarm to-night at all, though there was plenty doing last night and the night afore—three calls we had last night, and one a biggish job down Brompton way," comes upon me like a knell after several hours' waiting, and we soon afterwards retire discomfited.

I had enjoyed similar experiences to the foregoing at different stations on many evenings before even that portion of my ambition was realised, which aimed at galloping through the town upon an engine at full speed. This experience was by no means so delightful as I anticipated. If a parched pea could be made to balance itself on the convex surface of an inverted spoon, it would closely resemble my position on the rounded boiler which serves for engine-seat. My first step, too, is a false one; for, in clambering up heavily, I place my foot on the ladder slung lengthways at the side, and by unshipping it delay our start three seconds. Then the helmet lent me to replace my hat has a chin-strap which is too short for me, and takes the skin off my nose instead of passing in secure comfort under the chin. When we're off, my feet dangle unpleasantly as if they belong to another self who attends fires, until I nearly unship the ladder again, in my anxiety to feel firm. The chin-strap conducts itself so unpleasantly that I have to take the helmet off, and occupy one hand in unbuckling and lengthening it, while the other clutches with a drowning man's earnestness at a little iron bar behind. All this has taken place in less

time than is occupied in writing it. The "call" came up a tube to the room I was sitting in, and the single word "Manual" was given in reply. A rapid change of coats, a catch at the vicious helmet, and we are at the station door, where the engine is ready manned, and the savage-looking horses eager to be off. "Under three minutes from the time of the first call to our turning the corner of the first street," whispers my guide; but this makes no impression, and indeed seems rather a long time than otherwise, to a man who feels he's been acting a flash of lightning. "Hi! hi! hi!" shout the sturdy fellows on the look-out. "Hi! hi! hi!" echo the silent streets we tear through. Firemen have perched themselves on odd quaint parts of the engine until they look like green and red excrescences growing there; our horses clatter along as if madly sharing the excitement; and idle loungers follow us, or point our way out lazily to each other as we rush by. But the convexity of the wood-covered tank upon which I sit continues to give me most serious trouble. My neighbours preserve their statuesque attitudes, keeping their hands folded before them, and disdaining to move a muscle even when we jerk round the sharpest corners. The shouting is confined to the two foremen, one of whom stands on each side the driver, in the attitude of pilots on the watch. Their lungs are of great power. The rather stout foreman on my side might have passed in any competition for the magnitude, frequency, and volume of his "Hi! hi! hi." The other and slimmer foreman's voice is a note or two shriller, and after some experience of the effect of speaking-trumpets during a storm at sea, I am disposed to say his shouts would be heard above the loudest blast from the most sonorous wind-instrument in the world. When both fat and thin foreman mingled their voices, the effect was simply terrific, and my seat seemed to slope to the ground more maliciously than ever. Then the gin-shops emptied themselves, and their late occupants gazed after us as we continued our demoniacal rush; then pedestrians suspended their chat, and seemed to say, "There's a fire somewhere," with an air of giving information; then cabmen, omnibus drivers, and riders craned their necks eagerly to mark the way we took, and to look for the red smoke mark in the sky; then elf-like shadows fell across the upper windows of the houses, and nightcapped heads were thrust out, while the clomp, clomp, clomp of the horses' hoofs, the fitful glare from our engine lamps, and the motionless disciplined silence of the firemen—whose duty it is to keep still, just as it is the foremen's functions to shout—have an appropriateness of their own. Hi! hi! hi! while my left-hand neighbour exchanges signals with the man in charge of the fire-escape by Aldgate church, each extending his arm level from the shoulder like a human telegraph-post. This I learn subsequently—for apart from my objection to transgress fixed rules, my energies are devoted to sticking on, and conversation would be a mockery—ap-

prises the keeper of the fire-escape that he will not be wanted for the errand we are bound on. Our fire is at Horsleydown-stairs, a river-side storehouse, where there are no women or children to be saved from upper windows, but only sacks, and bales, and packing-cases, for which the ladder would be useless. Hi! hi! hi! down the Minories, at a spanking gallop which leaves me breathless, when we meet a larger fire-engine than our own trotting quietly back. Its foreman jumps down, and, giving us a military salute, explains how he "met 'the stop' when half way there, and that it was only some straw which had caught fire, which the warehousemen had put out themselves." There is nothing for it but to turn back; and it is with an undisguised feeling of personal injury that I find myself quietly trotting through the streets we galloped and shouted along a few minutes before.

Another experience—a false alarm of fire, given to show the speed with which engines can be brought to a given spot. We are on Southwark-bridge, on a dark and windy night, and a couple of policemen for messengers are our first want. "The men in charge would refuse to listen to a call from one of the public until they had corroborated it in some way; but when a policeman in uniform gives the alarm, it's their duty to turn out at once." We wait even more then the conventional period for one of those estimable public servants. On arrival, he proves dense, stupid, and disagreeably destitute of humour. "There ain't no fire as I can see," was his response to a carefully elaborated explanation of our motive for sending him with a false alarm. Wearily, but patiently, the ground is gone over again, and our purpose laboriously made clear. "But how can engines come to a fire when there ain't one?" was conscientious, but embarrassing; so our friend, who remained provokingly civil and good tempered throughout, was finally told to find one of his fellows, and return to us for instructions. This done, both policemen were directed to call at the Watling-street and Thames-street Fire-Brigade stations, with the message, "Wanted at Southwark toll-bridge," and to come away before a single question could be put. We impressed upon them that their function ended here; that whether we set the Thames on fire during their absence, or whether we exercised our authority improperly, and carried on an idle hoax, was no concern of theirs; and that, having recognised our credentials, their duty ended with delivering the message and earning the reward. It wanted seven minutes to eleven when they started, and at two minutes past we heard the bark of a dog and the sound of wheels. This was "the curriole" from Watling-street, a small hand-engine, drawn by two men, and always accompanied by Captain Shaw's dog. It must have been patent both to bipeds and quadruped that neither the toll-house nor the adjacent buildings were alight, long before they reached the summit of the little hill; but there was no

relaxation of speed until, panting and breathless, they reached the bridge. Here, at a signal from my companion, they took up their station silently, and so far under the shadow of one of the toll-houses as to be out of sight of the coming horse and steam-engines. This was scarcely done, when the now familiar "Hi, hi, hi!" mingled with the heavy tramp of horses' feet and the swiftly approaching lamps, were seen to turn the corner and descend the hill, then cross the valley up which Thames-street runs, and gallop up at railway speed to where we stood. The scene now became infinitely exciting. The alarm had spread, and engine after engine came up. Faster than we could note, the swiftly gleaming lamps multiplied, and the wild mingling of men's voices and the clomp from horses' feet went on. But there was wonderful method in it all; and as each engine came up, it filed off into the shadow of the bridge. There was neither questioning from, nor explanation to the men called out on duty. My companion simply stepped out of the shadow into the middle of the road, and signalled with both arms, "Stop!" when the excitement dropped, and the horses and engine were drawn up at the place directed, as if being summoned fruitlessly were in the regular course. The policemen were slow messengers, and we learnt afterwards that the huge steam-engine started fully equipped from Watling-street in two minutes and twenty seconds after the call.

"Hi, hi, hi!" on another night along Holborn, down a narrow turning from Gray's Inn-lane, over the hollow leading to the prison, and up the ascent at a hand-gallop on the other side. No false alarm or provoking "Stop!" this time, for the full blaze of a burning house is seen against the dark sky, shooting up a perfect rocket of oddly shaped sparks and stars; then leaping into a flame, like the golden fountain exhibited years ago at an emporium of science now defunct; then sullenly sinking down, as if offended at the streams of cold water consistently poured into its midst. Such are our first impressions of the fire. The crowd is in a dense line, stretching from the prison to the opposite side of the road. Beyond the close border formed by it is a huge open space, like an impromptu market-place, in which hose and enginemen, firemen, turncocks, and policemen are already at work. The duty of the latter seems to be confined to keeping the crowd in an unbroken line, and it is discharged with wonderfully little difficulty. Beyond the blazing house and down the turning leading to Farringdon-street is a second human wall; and the opposite corner, where Exmouth-street and another turning join, is similarly hemmed in. After we have dismounted, and are strolling round the place preserved, it becomes curious to note how even the roughest portion of the crowd does not attempt to trespass across the imaginary line chalked down. Jostling, pushing, and a little genial horse-play are discernible in the hinder ranks; but the men and women in front stand shoulder to shoulder as firmly as, perhaps more

firmly than volunteers on parade. We have passed through this living wall, which opened for us at our approach, and closed again in its old position directly we were through. A passing thought of "the waters which miraculously formed a wall upon the right hand and upon the left" for the children of Israel was suggested by the sea of faces tiding to and fro; but no pursuing Pharaoh followed, and the scene before us soon engrossed our full attention. At this time the house we had come to see was one mass of flame. From each of its windows, as well as from roof and doorway, a fierce strong blaze shot forth, making the large enclosed space hot, and lighting up the firemen's figures, until their brightly polished helmets looked, as they moved rapidly in and out the darkness, like gaudy beetles of gigantic size assembled in conclave before proceeding to some butterfly's ball. Everything was surprisingly quiet, and as unlike the famous stage representation of a house on fire as could well be possible. One engine was pumping away merrily at the corner of Exmouth-street; another stood idle by the pavement skirting the prison, and exactly opposite the burning house; a third was at the Farringdon-road corner; while a red waggon of the London Salvage Corps, and a stray volunteer engine, stood at the side nearest Gray's Inn-lane. The house was empty, and the property of a railway company. Neither lives nor valuables were to be saved, and the full energy of hose and men was directed to quelling the fire before it should spread to the inhabited house at its side, or to the human warrens lying between it and the rotten old workhouse behind. If the inmates of that crazy edifice could only have been removed and provided for in safety, how ardently one would have longed that the fire might defeat its sturdy assailants, and progress until it swept up the noisome dens and cellars, unwholesome wards, and cramped old rooms and staircases in and up which the Clerkenwell paupers are packed!

"Are we sure to get it under before it catches the next house?" repeated the driver of the engine which was standing stationary and useless, exactly opposite the fire. "Well, it's difficult to say just yet; but, from what I see of it, it would not surprise me if the whole place came down with a run before many minutes are over." The flames were now stretching half way across the road, sent a hot breath into our faces, and, at half a dozen paces nearer, had given beard and hair that dry wispy feel which precedes actual singeing. At this time, the only sounds were the crackling and subdued roar of the burning timbers, the monotonous pump, pump, of the engine to the left, and the rush and hiss of the water from the hose. The people in the crowd drew deep gasps of delight as the fire seemed to make way, just as at a display of fireworks. The foremen, who are easily recognised by their metal shoulder-straps, gave an occasional word to their men; and the fire and its attendants went on in what seemed to be a prescribed routine. Had it all been re-

heard beforehand, the proceedings could not have been more business-like and methodical. That the engine I was near stood idle, was due to the failure of the water supply from the plug it should have worked from. Turncock, beadle, and other functionaries had rammed and probed without effect; and the most powerful engine at the fire was unavailable, for the simple reason that the parochial arrangements, with beautiful consistency, had permitted a principal water-main to become useless. Just as the flames were at their fiercest, a strange rumbling sound mixed with their fiery hiss; then the whole front of the house bulged forward; then it seemed to quiver, much as a theatrical scene does when run rapidly across the stage by the shifters; then, without further warning, it became a heap of ruins. It fell forward, in one dead lump. In a single instant, what had been a house was a mere chaotic map of charred timbers and broken bricks and stones. One great crash, in which its front split up into countless solid hurtful atoms, injuring one fireman slightly, and spitting angrily across the road, and all was over. Nothing remained to show even the shape of a room or the direction of a staircase. A huge lump of ugly rubbish, which smoked and hissed under cold water, and that was all. The hose kept playing vigorously; for certain tell-tale "bull's-eyes" showed that the building behind had caught fire, and needed careful tending; then the foremen present came round and quietly gave instructions to their silent men; then the waggon of the Salvage Corps drove off; the firemen made up the rubbish, which had been a house, into a more seemly heap; the watch was told off for the night; the crowd gradually melted away; and soon the water, flowing steadily and plentifully down the alleys near, alone reminded the spectator of the fierce element subdued.

PANCAKES AND BELLS.

THAT mankind are more disposed to mirth than grief, may appear from the fact continually recurring that the grave passes readily into the burlesque as by a natural law. The sacred, the solemn, and the staid, imply a strain upon the mind to which it unwillingly submits; the bow then unbends, and the thing gladly relaxes. In an age so devoted to burlesque as the present, illustrations cannot be wanting of the manner in which the sublime is made to pass into the ridiculous, and the beautiful to become vulgar and even coarse. The finest poetry, the finest music, the most fanciful legends, whether of antiquity or the most recent fairy lore, are in these times customarily traduced and linked to the lowest associations. The art thus exercised grows, like other arts, out of a natural tendency. Even grave customs have a similar proclivity to burlesque themselves. The shriving-bell of an elder period became after the Reformation the Pancake Bell, which is still rung in some parishes on Shrove Tuesday, from half-past

twelve until two o'clock in the afternoon. Originally designed to call people together to shrift or confession, as a preparation for Lent, it was ultimately used for a signal to the people to begin frying their pancakes. This fact is noticed by Taylor, the water-poet, in the following facetious manner: "By the time the clock strikes eleven," says he, "which by the help of a knavish sexton is commonly before nine, there is a bell rung, called the pancake bell, the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted and forgetful either of manners or humanity. Then there is called wheaten flour, which cooks do mingle with water, spice, and other tragical and magical incantations, and then put it little by little into a frying-pan of boiling suet, where it makes a confused dismal hissing, untill at last, by the skill of the cooke, it is transformed into the form of a flip-jack, which *ominous incantation* ignorant people doe devour greedily."

Ominous incantation! Taylor seems to have thought that the frying of these flip-jacks was a custom originally related to black magic; by the celebrated Franklin the custom was more favourably esteemed. He connected happy notions with it. "Some folks," he says, "think it never will be good times till houses are tiled with pancakes." The cake itself probably comes down to us from pagan times, and the prefix is derived rather from the god Pan than the vessel in which it is so curiously made. The pancake may be thus elevated to the highest antiquity, and, with the bell-ringing in addition, might then have formed a part in such an incantation, "ominous" or other, as Taylor has intimated.

To Taylor clearly the ceremony of making pancakes was significant, or, as he words it, "ominous." He probably connected it with that natural terror which is called panic, to which shepherds, dwellers in forests, and some animals, are occasionally liable. Military troops are subject, also, to this strange kind of sudden fright. The great element in this species of terror is, indeed, its suddenness. It frequently occurs without any real cause; or, at least, it is inspired by some trivial occasion, or misapprehension of danger. The soldier, by the influence of his dreadful, however needful, trade, is reduced, it would thus seem, to a mere animal condition, and flees from the unknown by the force of instinct only, like the herds of the field.

One might, by virtue of the prefix Pan (which stands for the universe of things, personified), include in our consideration of this subject an infinity of particulars, and affect all kinds of knowledge in illustrative details. But our ambition is confined within narrower limits. We may gather from this instance how tenacious the ancient superstitions have been of their existence, and how, at last, in Protestant times, they have mingled with common occurrences, having some small force of custom left, but inept to excite serious reflection, though not to provoke sportive remark. The pancake-bell no longer calls us to confession, and bells

themselves now scarcely awaken the sentiments that they did formerly. We no longer ascribe the invention of bells to Noah, as was done by a scholar of the twelfth century, Dionysius Bar Salhi, who has left us a learned disquisition on them. Among the stories he tells is this: That the patriarch was commanded to strike on the bell with a piece of wood three times a day, in order to summon the workmen to their labour while building the ark.

Grave men have repeated this idle legend, and referred to it as giving the origin, forsooth, of church bells. The opinion is, in fact, common to Oriental writers. Certain it is, that ancient nations had bells in use for sacred as well as for domestic purposes. The Romans, we know, had them; for Strabo records that market-time was announced by the ringing of them. The tomb of Porsenna, king of Tuscany, was hung round with bells. The hour of bathing was made known at Rome by the sound of a bell; the night-watchman also carried one, and it served to call up servants in great houses. Sheep had bells tied about their necks to frighten away wolves, or perhaps as an amulet. A practice still obtains in the country, even in England, of attaching a bell to the neck of the ewe, by which to guide the lambs. This practice is generally regarded as the relic of an ancient superstition.

Bells were introduced into the Christian church, about the year four hundred, by Paulinas, bishop of Nola. More than two centuries later, an extraordinary occurrence happened in relation to them, during the siege of Sens by Clothair the Second. Lupus, the bishop of Orleans, ordered the bells of St. Stephen's church to be rung. The deafening sound so terrified the besiegers that they fled panic-stricken, like a flock of sheep or a herd of bulls.

We learn from Bede that wooden rattles (*sacra signa*) were used before bells came into fashion in the churches of Britain. The first intimation of them occurs in 680. The first regular peal of bells was put up in Croyland Abbey, Lincolnshire, by the famous abbot, Turketullus, who died circa 870. Subsequently to that period they were in frequent use. The arrival of kings and great personages was usually greeted by the ringing of a joyous peal. Henry the Eighth was so welcomed by the churchwardens of Waltham Abbey church, for which service they paid the ringers a penny. The bells used in monasteries were sometimes rung with ropes, having brass or silver rings at the ends for the hands, and were originally rung by the priests themselves. In course of time the office was performed by the servants, and sometimes by those incapable of other duties. Thus "in the monastery of Westminster there was a fayre yong man which was blinde, whom the monks had ordeyned to ryng the bellis."

We need scarcely refer to the superstitious practice of baptising bells, intended to endow them with the power of acting as preservatives against thunder and lightning, hail, wind, and all kinds of tempest, and also for the driving away of evil spirits. Bells were named in

honour of particular saints, and the ceremony was conducted with much pomp. The oldest bell belonging to a church of St. James's was consecrated to St. Nicholas, and its margin was inscribed with a Latin prayer: "O presul pie Nicolæ nobis miserere."

Of the uses to which bells were formerly applied, the Church of England still retains a few. Among these is the Passing-bell, now tolled after death, anciently before: either to bespeak the prayers of all good Christians for a soul just departing, or to drive away the demons who were ready to receive their prey. A high price was demanded for this service by the ringers. On the day appointed for the interment of Queen Mary, the consort of William the Third, the king commanded that the largest bell in every cathedral and collegiate and parochial church in England and Wales should be tolled in the morning from two until three, and from five until six.

Many persons yet believe that the good luck of the rest of the year depends on their celebrating the Feast of Pancakes on Shrove Tuesday; and bells have yet touching or happy associations. Who can forget Schiller's famous song of the Bell, in which its founding, its baptism, and its various uses are gloriously sung? Poe, too, has given us a lyric on bells, in which they ring audibly in every line, and leave an impression on the mind not easily to be effaced. Prosaic churchwardens, who have the custody of these musical chattels, should regard themselves as especially honoured by the office, though indeed it extends a very small way; they are bound to supply the church with a bell and rope, but not to furnish a ring of bells. People are thus rung into their church and into their grave. The palace of Macbeth had a bell on which his lady was appointed to strike "when his drink was ready," and which he did not wish his guest, King Duncan, to hear. At the recent festive season, who disliked to listen to Big Ben, or to the peal of St. Paul's, when they "sounded on into the drowsy race of night," welcoming in the merry Christmas, or ringing the old year out, and the new year in! The banquetings—and they are many—which bells announce, or to which they are accessory, are benevolent, charitable, and friendly in their purpose, frequently reconciling differences in the past, and cementing Christian fellowship in the future. At weddings and at christenings, too, we hear their merry voices; and while such things continue, they cannot cease to be rich in poetical associations, and dear to feelings "that spring eternal in the human heart."

Happily, however, their superstitious uses have sunk into abeyance. Fuller long ago disputed their claims to accomplish all that was pretended in their favour. A legend was originally inscribed on or near them, which he quotes:

Men's death I tell by doleful knell;
Lightning and thunder I break asunder;
On Sabbath all to church I call;
The sleepy head I raise from bed;
The winds so fierce I do disperse;
Men's cruel rage I do assuage.

But, says Fuller, "the frequent firing of abbey churches confuteth the proud motto. Bells are no effectual charm against lightning; for whereas it appears that abbey steeples, though quilted with bells almost cap-à-pie, were not proof against the sword of God's lightning."

By the law of the land, churchwardens are compelled to see that the bells be not rung superstitiously upon holy days or eves abrogated by the Book of Common Prayer.

THE TWO SISTERS OF COLOGNE.

MORE than forty years ago I was a poor art-student, journeying over Europe, with a knapsack on my back, having resolved to visit, if possible, every gallery worth a painter's study. I started with but a few shillings in my pocket; but I had colours and brushes, strength of limb, and determination of heart. It was my practice, on entering a town, to offer to paint a portrait, in exchange for so many days' bed and board; or, when I found no man's vanity to be thus played upon, I applied at all the likeliest shops, and I seldom failed of work. Thus I was enabled to carry out my scheme, while most of my fellow-students were vegetating where I had left them, with minds unenlarged by contact with the men and the arts of other countries. Though I left England with a heavy heart—for I was leaving behind me the hope and promise of my life—and though I was away on my walk through Europe more than two years, "in weariness" and "in fastings often," yet I never envied the unambitious routine, the inglorious repose, of my less enterprising friends. I was constantly obliged to go without a dinner, when a turn of ill-luck (some temporary illness, or the artistic obtuseness of a whole city) had drained my purse very low; but I seldom lost courage—courage and a confident hope in the future.

I was nearly in this plight, however, when I entered Cologne late one evening in September. I had been laid up at Dusseldorf for many days with low fever, and the belt in which I carried my thalers round my waist had been much lightened in consequence. My illness had left me weak; and I crawled into the town, dusty and footsore. Twilight was gathering around the many spires and towers as I crossed the bridge of boats; a dark ruddy light alone remained in the calm river, where purple shadows were fast deepening into black; and the reflexion of a candle here and there flickered in long scales of gold upon the water. It was very hot. I sat down on a stone outside the cathedral, too exhausted to go from pillar to post, bargaining for a bed, as was my wont. I pulled a crust and bunch of grapes from my wallet. Vespers were going forward, as I knew from seeing a few devout old women hobbling up the steps, and disappearing through the heavy leathern door. In no like spirit it occurred to me, after a while, to follow them. It would be pleasanter than outside: the soothing

influence of music, the whiff of incense, the luxury of a straw-bottomed chair—these were the attractions, I fear, that drew me in. Heaven knows, I was properly punished, inasmuch as I can never again hear Cologne Cathedral named without a shudder.

There were but few persons present, and those were huddled together in one of the side-chapels, dimly lighted by the flare of half a dozen candles upon the altar, where a priest was officiating. The only other light throughout the great shadowy pile was given forth by a feeble lamp or votive candle here and there, burning its little life away before the Mother of Seven Sorrows, or the presiding saint of some smaller betinselled shrine, and struggling out into the great sea of darkness fast gathering over all. The chairs were piled away in blocks, except a few, left for the use of the devout, near the altar. I preferred slinking into a confessional against the wall, where no ray of light penetrated. I laid my head upon my knapsack. I heard the priest's monotonous drone, the tinkle of the little bell, the low heavenly murmur of the organ, and then—I fell asleep.

Did I dream what follows? As I am telling you as simply and truthfully as I can all that I know of the matter, I begin by saying that I have never been able to satisfy myself entirely upon this point. Assuredly, the strangeness is no way lessened, but rather increased twofold, as the sequel will show, if one can believe that the strong and painful impression left upon my brain was produced while I was asleep.

I woke—that is to say, my own distinct impression is that I woke—just as the service was finished. In half an hour the cathedral would be silent and deserted; then it would be locked up for the night. If possible, why not pass the night here, instead of seeking and paying for a bed elsewhere? My legs felt mightily disinclined to carry me a yard further. At dawn, when the doors were opened, I should rise up, refreshed, to seek for work. But, even while I revolved these things in my mind, I saw a light coming down the aisle where I was—nearer and nearer. I slunk as far back as possible into the corner of the confessional, hoping to escape detection. But it was not to be. The sacristan was upon his rounds, to see that there were no loiterers in the sacred building; his vigilant eye spied me. He laid a hand on my shoulder; he shook me—I must move off. With a heavy sigh I rose, and then, for the first time, perceived two young women standing behind the sacristan, their eyes fixed upon me. No doubt they were leaving the cathedral, and had stopped, arrested at the sight of a young man being unearthed from a confessional.

It was impossible to mistake that they were sisters, though one was shorter and much less well-favoured than the other; but they had the same grey piercing eyes, fair skins, and hair which was something beyond flaxen—it was almost white. This hair was worn in a strange fashion, which I cannot describe, though I see it even now before me—the glittering spiral threads

hanging partly down the back, and surmounted by some sort of black coil or conical head-gear. Their aspect, altogether, was very singular: I found that, so soon as my eye had fallen on them, I could not take it off; and, to say the truth, if I stared, the young women returned my stare with interest. As I moved wearily away, the elder one spoke:

"Have you no money to buy yourself a night's lodging, young man?"

"I have enough for that, *Fräulein*," I replied, colouring, "but I am almost too tired to go about and look for one. . . . I have been ill, and have walked some miles to-day."

The sisters exchanged glances.

"If it be so, we will give you a supper and a night's lodging. We need no payment. We are bound by a vow to help any poor wayfarer so far. You may come with us, young man."

Something within me said, "Do not go." But why? What young fellow of twenty would refuse the hospitality of two handsome women, especially when he has but a few shillings in his pocket; is tired and hungry? Yet I hesitated.

"Accept it or decline it," said she, who was still the spokeswoman, somewhat impatiently. "We cannot wait here longer."

We were at the door as she said this.

"I will paint your pictures in the morning, then, in return for your hospitality," I replied, smiling. I was a vain boy, I am afraid, in those days. I had good teeth, and liked to show them. The younger sister, I saw, never took her eyes off me. There was no harm in appearing to the best advantage. I bowed rather directly to her as I spoke; and once more the sisters exchanged glances.

A hired carriage was waiting. Without a word, they stepped into it, and I followed them. The driver clearly knew where to drive. Without any order being given, we set off rapidly, but in what direction I did not think of observing. Like most German carriages, the glasses rattled over the stones, so that I could not hear myself speak. I made a futile effort, but neither sister attempted to respond. Both sat there, opposite me, motionless, leaning back in the two corners. I had nothing for it but to watch their faces in silence, and speculate about their history, as the lamps, swung across the narrow streets, threw lurid jets of light ever and anon upon those two white masks under the black pointed coifs.

It was not until we had been driving for upwards of twenty minutes, and had come out into what I suppose to have been a suburb of the city, judging from its high garden walls, that it suddenly flashed upon me that I had left my knapsack behind me in the confessional. An exclamation of annoyance escaped me.

"What is it?" said the younger sister, leaning forward; her voice was far more musical than her sister's.

I told her what troubled me.

"Did it contain anything of value?" asked the other.

I shook my head. "Nothing of value to

any one but myself—a change of clothes, my colours and brushes, and a few books."

"The cathedral is locked now. It would be no use our returning. It will be open at six; and if you are there before that hour, you will find your property all safe, no doubt. . . . Here we are, Gretchen; have you the key? Open the door."

We stopped before a small single-storied house, having a wall on either side of it, and no other habitation near. So much I saw, while Gretchen (the younger one) drew out a key, and opened the house door. The carriage drove off. I followed the sisters into a narrow passage. Upon the right was the kitchen; on the left, the staircase; at the back, a door, leading, by a flight of steps, into a garden.

"Come with me, young man," said Gretchen. "Lori will get supper ready meanwhile."

The elder sister turned into the kitchen; Gretchen led the way up-stairs.

"We have but two rooms. . . . Lori will prepare your bed in the parlour, after supper. . . . Will you wash your hands?"

She struck a light, and opened a door to the left, at the top of the stairs. It was the bedroom of the two sisters—small, yet containing two beds, and several great chests. A black crucifix, too, I observed in the corner of the room.

"And you two live here, alone?" I asked. "No servant? Are you not afraid sometimes?"

She shook her head. "No, we are not afraid. Lori is afraid of nothing—not even of ghosts. Do you believe in ghosts?"

I laughed.

"Do not laugh," she whispered. "Ghosts are the only things I fear. Sometimes I fancy I see them in the garden there." She shuddered. "See what a fine garden we have. . . . Plenty of space, is there not?"

She was pouring water into a basin from an earthenware ewer, I remember, as she said this. She set the vessel down, and turned to the window, through which the moon, which was now rising behind a solitary sycamore, shone into the room.

A square space enclosed by high walls where the grass grew rank, and a moss-grown walk, led to a little door in the wall at the further end. This was what she was pleased to term the garden.

"The violets grow rarely there in the spring," she said, with a strange smile, as if interpreting my thought.

When I had washed my hands, Gretchen conducted me into the next room, where Lori had now laid the supper. It was a small chamber, with an alcove, or closet, at one end, a great earthenware stove, and a number of gaudy prints around the walls. In the midst was the table, where three covers were laid. It was decked with a bunch of China asters in a jar, and was substantially furnished, I was glad to see, with a pie, a dish of raw ham, a loaf of black bread, and some grapes. As for drinkables, there was a small jug of Bavarian beer, and there was a bottle of water.

Lori bustled to and fro; Gretchen lighted another candle, and set them both on the stove, behind the table. As she did so, my eye was attracted to the floor, on which the light streamed. It was uncarpeted; and a number of black-beetles were running across it, alarmed by the illumination, no doubt. Now, I have always had an irrational repugnance to this insect: I am afraid my face showed it.

"We cannot get rid of the nasty creatures," said Gretchen. "They come out in myriads from crevices near the stove; but the light always frightens them away."

We sat down. I was very hungry, and fell to with right good will. Lori kept me in company. She sat opposite; and whenever I raised my eyes, I saw the movement of her massive jaws defined against the candles behind her. Gretchen sat on my right hand; thus the light fell sideways on her face, while that of her sister was in shadow; and, the table being small, Gretchen's hand and mine came frequently in contact. She ate very little; she crumbled and played with a piece of bread, and seldom allowed those strange piercing eyes of hers to leave my face. As supper went on, Lori talked and laughed a good deal; Gretchen said nothing. She seemed to grow more and more absorbed in her own thoughts; and once, when her hand touched mine, I observed that it shook. She filled up a tumbler of water, and drank it. Lori pushed the beer towards me.

"Fill up for yourself——" I drained the jug into my glass. I raised it to my lip and began to drink. Suddenly Gretchen uttered a sharp cry, and started up. In doing so, she nearly upset the table; and her elbow somehow came in contact with the glass in my hand. Its contents were spilt upon the floor.

"Ach! the beetle—the horrid thing!" she cried. "It has gone down my back, I believe!" She rushed from the room, as white as a sheet.

"Fool!" muttered Lori, setting her jaws tight. "What waste of good liquor! And there is no more in the house! I will send her, for her pains, to go fetch another schoppen."

"Not on my account, I pray. I like water quite as well. Nay, your 'Bayerische bier' sometimes disagrees with me."

She looked up sharply into my face.

"Why, what manner of man are you, that drink water?" she demanded.

"I seldom afford myself anything else," I replied.

The beer had streamed from the table to the floor, where it had formed itself into a long diagonal channel towards the stove. It was still dripping, which drew my attention, I suppose, to the boards. The beer had encountered one or two black-beetles in its course. I had heard of their fondness for fermented liquors; it had taken effect very quickly in this case. I saw them struggle, feebly and more feebly, to crawl away from the intoxicating flood. Lori's quick eye discerned what I was looking at.

"The nasty creatures! They soon make themselves tipsy," she said, as she ran and

fetched a broom. Then she swept them up into a plate, and carefully wiped the floor.

Gretchen now returned to the room, and helped her sister to clear away the supper. As she moved about, I, my hunger being appeased, noted with a quickened preception what a supple grandly formed creature this Gretchen was. The fancy came into my head, that the White Cat, when transformed, must have resembled her; fair and lissom, with delicate pink nostrils and strange bright eyes. In the elder sister I thought the cat grew akin to the tigress; her sharp narrow teeth, heavy jaw, and stealthy cruel eyes, filled me more and more with an indefinite repulsion. I was glad when she said:

"I will go see after your bed, young man. Gretchen will keep you company meanwhile."

I was sitting in the moonlight, near the window. Gretchen stood beside me.

"You are unlike all the men I have known," she said, after she had looked at me, in her strange way, for some minutes. "Are all Englishmen like you?"

"Happily for them, I suppose, very few."

"But Englishmen are faithful," she said, eagerly. "They never deceive, never betray. I have read about one Englishman in a book. Could you be true to a woman, without changing all your life?"

"I should hope so!" I cried, with the impetuosity of youth. "A man's love is not worth much otherwise."

She stretched forth her long white hands and laid them on my shoulders.

"Will you be my love, young Englishman?" she murmured, in a hoarse tremulous voice. "I can make you rich. You need toil no more. I can save you from great dangers, too. I like your face."

I started up, blushing, for the thing came upon me suddenly, after all; but I replied, without hesitation:

"Were I to say I could love you, Fräulein, I should be false. I have left behind me, in England, one whom I have long loved, and to whom my word is pledged. I——"

"Listen," she interrupted, vehemently, but in a whisper, as though dreading to be overheard. "I have more in my power than you know of. Do not reject the love I offer; it may be the worse for you if you do. I would save you, young man."

I understood her to refer to my poverty and her own wealth, as I replied, with a little flourish of gallantry:

"If my love for another makes me proof against your charms, Fräulein, I am not likely to yield to the temptation of riches. Poverty and I are well acquainted already. Its dangers and hardships cannot scare me, for I have experienced them all."

"There are some dangers you have not experienced. A comely young fellow may run risks sometimes that he knows not of."

There was a wild look in her eyes as she spoke, and her words left a vague uncomfort-

able impression on me. But Lori entered the room at this moment, carrying my bedding in her arms; and further conversation with Gretchen was impossible. She helped her sister to spread the bed upon a trestle in the corner of the room; then she fetched sheets and a patchwork counterpane, the design of which I can distinctly recal even now. There were triangular bits of red cloth inserted here and there, which looked to me like so many small tongues of fire;—I have good reason to remember them.

When her task was done, Lori stood before me, with her arms akimbo.

"You feel sleepy, young man, no doubt, after your long day. We keep early hours, for we are up betimes. You shall have a cup of coffee and a slice of black bread at five, before we bid you Godspeed. Nay, no excuses. It is in our vow. *Schlafen Sie wohl.*"

Had I spoken the truth, I should have said that, far from being sleepy, I had never felt more wide awake than I did then. Ever since supper a strange restlessness of mind had taken the place of the languor which had oppressed me. Gretchen made as if she would have spoken when Lori ceased. She turned towards me. I saw her fingers working nervously at the black apron. I believe it was her sister's silent ascendancy over her which restrained her, for I intercepted a sideways glance from Lori's stealthy eyes which she shot towards Gretchen. With a face in which fierceness and terror and anguish seemed to be conflicting, the latter looked at me, as she followed her sister from the room, without even wishing me the customary "good night."

What did it all mean? Now, for the first time, I think, I began revolving in my mind all that I had seen and heard since I entered that house, and a disagreeable sense of something strange and mysterious gradually took possession of me. What was there about these sisters to inspire mistrust? With the elder, indeed, I could understand it. There was a physical repulsion which made the blood curdle in my veins when I thought of her. But the younger was beautiful to look upon. She had shown herself tenderly inclined towards me. Why should I find myself thinking of her, with a feeling akin to dread? Her words recurred to me. At what danger had she hinted? There had been something wild about her eyes, about her talk, at times. Then there was her extraordinary proposal. Was she mad? I remembered her strange conduct at supper, the fierce authoritative look wherewith her sister had overawed her. It seemed a likely solution to much that was otherwise inexplicable about them both. But, if so, how unaccountable that Lori, knowing her sister to be subject to fits and fancies like these, should offer hospitality to a stranger! There was nothing immodest about the demeanour of either of them; there was nothing that could suggest the suspicion that this was a *guet-à-pens* of any sort. The idea of robbery was ridiculous. Was not my poverty, so apparent in the threadbare

student's blouse I wore, a sufficient safeguard? Why, I had not even my knapsack with me, as they knew; and I was young and muscular—not an easy victim for open violence, had any been intended.

I racked my brain with endeavours to arrive at some definite conclusion, for as to trying to sleep, I found it useless. My brain seemed on fire by this time. Every moment I felt myself growing more excited, more keenly alive to every sound, and all my mental perceptions quickened. The single candle they had left me, burned dim; it seemed to fill the room with all sorts of grim shapes and shadows. After a long interval, during which everything in the little house was absolutely still, I got up, in my restlessness, feeling that anything was better than to lie tossing there, a prey to feverish fancies. I walked about the room, with the candle, examining every article in it. First, there were the coloured prints upon the walls—among others, one of the Loreley, I remember, and one, a scene from Schiller's Robbers, which made my blood run cold as I looked at it. There was a cupboard, which I opened; nothing but a few plates and one old knife. I sat down again upon the bed, and my eye was attracted once more to the red tongues of the patchwork quilt. It was a very ingenious piece of work. I tried to follow the kaleidoscope pattern into which the various shreds had been wrought with that strange device of crimson cloth at regular intervals. Regular? No. At one place in the corner, I perceived now that three or four tongues seemed to have been sewn together. I held down the candle to examine them, and started back. What I had taken for crimson cloth was a stain of coagulated blood.

I shuddered. "Perhaps some one cut his finger here," I said; but I didn't believe my own words; and then I tried to laugh at myself, and said my brain was giving way. I started up. I saw nothing clearly. The Robbers and Loreley were dancing hobgoblin dances on the wall. The moonlight through the sycamore branches played in a shivering shadow on one spot of the floor. I knelt down, and crept along upon my hands and knees, examining the boards. But there was no stain there; only the smell of the beer in one place, and an army of those horrible beetles, who ran away from the light as I lowered it, to the back of the stove. I pursued them with a sudden savage impetus towards destruction. They all disappeared between two chinks in the floor. I set my foot on the boards. I thought one moved. I stooped, and saw at once that the two boards immediately behind the stove, though fitting closely, were not nailed down—might be removed, no doubt, with some little trouble. I dug my nails into the chinks and tried to lift one. In vain. I only tore my finger with a splinter. Then I bethought me of the old knife I had seen in the cupboard. With its help, I presently raised the end of one of the boards, and so drew it out. A square deal box lay concealed beneath. It had no lock or fastening of any kind.

Although my excitement was so strong, that I remember my two hands trembling as they laid hold of the lid, yet I paused for a moment before raising it. Was it a dishonourable action? My conscience told me I was justified, and I tore the box open. I nearly dropped the candle as my eyes beheld the contents.

First, there was a great bundle of coarse black hair; then one of curly flaxen, like a child's; then another of very long and silky brown—a woman's, evidently. Along with these, were four—six—eight—rows of *teeth*, some large and strong, some fine and white. A common ring or two, a silver watch-chain, a poor cloth cap, filled the remaining space in the box.

The horrible truth flashed upon me. I had been brought here, not to be robbed of my poor clothes, nor of what little coin I might have about me. These were only to be *thrown into the bargain*. They were seeking to compass my life, as they had done the lives of others, for the sake of such possessions as these before me—possessions independent of poverty or wealth! I remembered the tales that had been rife in my own country, not long before that time, touching Burke and Hare. And I now remembered, too, the look that Lori had given her sister, when, in my idiotic vanity, I had smiled and showed my teeth.

Now, I knew what was the danger to which Gretchen, in a sudden compunction and softening of heart towards me, had referred. Now, I could see clearly whither every incident of the evening tended. The beer at supper was drugged with some strong narcotic. Gretchen had tried to save me. Had she really done so? I had tasted the drink; and though I never felt wider awake in my life than I did at that horrible moment when the sweat started out upon my brow, in the consciousness that my life might not be worth an hour's purchase, might not the effect of the drug be only weakened and retarded for a while? The small quantity I had imbibed had excited my brain into an abnormal condition for the time. I had little doubt of this. Might it not be succeeded by a reaction? I was seized with a horrible dread of succumbing, sooner or later, to sleep. I should then be powerless. I cared for nothing, comparatively, if I could only keep awake. I started up. It was dangerous to sit still. I traversed the room with hasty strides. I tried to turn the handle of the door; it did not yield; it was locked on the outside. There could be no longer a doubt of the design against me.

The many church clocks through the old city struck two. I listened for any movement in the house, and once I fancied I heard some one breathing outside my door. But I waited a long time, and it was followed by no other sound. Then I began to drag the bed, the table, and the chairs, and to pile them up into a barricade against the door. This occupied some little time, and, work as quietly as I might, the necessary noise prevented my hearing anything else. It was not until my task was done that I became conscious of something moving in the

garden, just below my window. There was a dull low thud, as of some hard substance striking the earth at regular intervals. I crept to the window and looked out into the moonlight, which was now fast disappearing behind a gabled roof. Instead of illuminating the entire plot of ground, the faint rays now fell slantwise into the garden, of which more than one-half was swallowed in black shadow. But I clearly distinguished two figures. Do you remember Millais's *Vale of Rest*? When I saw that picture, years afterwards, I could not help shuddering. It recalled so vividly the attitude of the two sisters as I beheld them in that terrible moment. The women were digging a grave; the elder one with all her masculine energy; the younger, reluctantly, as it seemed, removing, with slow strokes of the spade, the black earth, and pausing long between each. Once she looked up, and the moonlight fell upon her wan haggard face. She put back the long silver-lighted hair from her brow; she leaned upon her spade; and then a whisper, like a serpent's, in her ear, urged her to her task again.

Should I fall asleep now, I was a dead man. I knew it. No strength, no agility, could save me. The dread of this became so acute, that it worked upon my imagination. I began to think I felt drowsy. A numbness seemed creeping over my limbs. A weight was falling gradually on my stiffened eyelids. I prayed, in an agony of terror, that I might not be killed asleep—that I might, at least, have a fight for my life.

Suddenly Lori raised her head and listened. The sound to which she listened—a whistle, so low that I could scarcely hear it—was repeated. She crept stealthily across the garden, and raised the latch of the postern, which evidently did not open from the outside. A man came in, a burly thickest fellow, and the door was closed again. The three stood together for a moment in the moonlight. Lori and the man looked up at my window (I took care they should not see me), while Gretchen turned her head away and wrung her hands. Then all three came slowly and noiselessly towards the house.

Now or never was my moment for escape! There was one chance for me. I had seen how the door opened . . . if I could manage to reach it! . . . But if I hesitated, a few minutes hence the drugged beer might complete its work, and I be unable to move hand or foot. I opened the window softly, and looked out. There was a drop of about twenty feet into the garden (which, it will be remembered, was some feet below the kitchen again). If I jumped this, the noise must attract attention; and I might sprain or break my leg into the bargain. An expedient occurred to me. I had not replaced the flooring which I had removed. The board, which ran the full length of the room, measured nearly sixteen feet. Leaning, as far as I could stretch, out of window, I managed to rest one end of this board upon the ground, the other against the house wall some four or five feet below me.

I had scarcely accomplished this, when I heard the sound of feet outside my door, a bolt withdrawn, the handle turned. My barricade would obstruct the doorway for some few minutes: but for some few minutes only. I had just time to swing myself from the window-sill by my hands, to get both feet round the plank, to slide to the ground, to fly like the wind, to raise the postern latch, when the crash of falling table and chairs reached my ears. I ran—I know not in which direction—up one street, and down another, on, on, fancying I heard the sound of feet behind me; no soul visible, to right or left. At last, breathless and exhausted, down by the river's side, I came to a soldiers' guard-house. A sentry was at the door; there was the ruddy light of the men's pipes and of a lantern within. No haven was ever more grateful to shipwrecked mariner. I fell down upon the step; the sergeant and his men came and stared, demanded with oaths what I wanted, and, as I could not speak at first, declared I was drunk. Then, as in half-inarticulate phrase I poured out my strange tale, they changed their minds, and declared I was mad. But as I was an amusing rather than a dangerous lunatic, and served to beguile the tedious hours of the night, they let me remain among them; asked the same stupid questions over and over again; laughed their horse-laugh; and spat and spat all around me, until daybreak. Then they directed me to the cathedral, and I left them. One of the sacristans was unlocking the doors as I got there. I found my knapsack untouched, in the dusky corner of the confessional; there, utterly worn out, at last, with the excitement of that eventful night, I leaned back, in the grey morning light, and fell asleep.

The sun was high when I awoke; the feet of the devout were shuffling in to their morning orisons. I shouldered my knapsack and crept away. My head ached; my limbs felt chill and numb. Had I been dreaming? Were they no more than mere shadows of the brain, which had left behind them so deep and terrible an impression? I met a sacristan—not the one whom I remembered the night before—as I was going out. I stopped to question him. Did he know anything of two fair-haired women who had been at vespers last evening? I described them. He stared at me, and shook his head. In the crowds who came there daily, how could he tell whom I meant? I left him, and entered a humble little gasthaus hard by, where, for a few groschen, I broke my fast. Here I made the same inquiries. I even essayed to tell my story; but I saw that, like the soldiers, the people thought me wandering in my wits. They told me, rather derisively, that I had better tell my story to the police. But how could I hope to be believed, unsupported as my extraordinary statement was, by any proof whatsoever? If I could not test the reality of these events to my own absolute satisfaction, was it likely that others would regard them as anything but the creations of an excited imagina-

tion? I wandered for a couple of hours through the city, trying to find my way to the house, the exterior of which I felt certain I should recognise. I could not even trace the road I had taken, and, at last, I gave it up. The conviction slowly and reluctantly grew up in me that I was suffering from the effects of a vivid nightmare. Its impression remained painfully strong on my mind for many days (I left Cologne the same afternoon); and, indeed, for some weeks, I never fell asleep without a dread of living over again those terrible hours. But “no ill dreams disturbed my rest;” and since the effect of all things must wear out in time, as months rolled on the memory of my night in Cologne became to me no more than a remarkable experience of the strange phantasmagoria which the mind may conjure up, and invest with every appearance of reality, when volition is removed. I drew over and over again, in my sketch-book, the heads of those two sisters, as they had appeared to me; and I wrote down, with extreme particularity, every word they had said, and every small circumstance of my dream.

One winter's evening in the following year I again passed through Cologne, on my road home. I was a richer man now than I had been eighteen months ago; my foot was on the first rung of the ladder, for I had painted a picture which had sold well. It was no longer necessary for me to carry about my worldly possessions on my back, or to seek out the poorest gasthaus. The steamer landed me, with other passengers, on the quay, hard by a handsome hotel. I resolved to patronise it. The evening was cold; but all along the quay, outside the hotel, in the court-yard, groups of people were standing, and talking with a slow heavy power of speech, betokening that the native mind was moved by some topic of more than common interest. I caught a word here and there which roused my curiosity. I asked the kelner who showed me to my little room what the subject of such general public interest was? An execution, he replied; adding that executions were rare events there, now, and that unusual interest had been excited by this one, from the fact that the persons who had suffered the extreme penalty of the law were *two sisters, murderers*, whose crimes had long escaped undetected.

I must have turned white instantly, for the man looked at me with some surprise.

“Did you ever see these women?” I managed at last to stammer out.

“No, mein Herr. I could not leave the hotel, to attend either the trial or execution. But there is an officer in the Speise-saal who can tell you everything about them, for he saw them in prison, and commanded the troops in the Platz to day.”

I said no more to the man, but went down to the coffee-room, a few minutes later, with my sketch-book in my hand. At one of the small round tables a middle-aged Prussian officer was

having his supper. Without more ado, I accosted him.

"Sir, you will forgive a stranger's intrusion, I hope. I am an Englishman just arrived in Cologne. I understand that you were present, in an official capacity, this day, at the execution of two women. You will oblige me greatly by giving me what information you can, respecting them. The motive that prompts me to ask this favour is something beyond common curiosity, as you shall presently learn."

"Be seated, sir," said the officer, politely, pointing to the chair opposite. "I will tell you all I know concerning the sisters Strauss. You are acquainted with the nature of the crime of which they were convicted? It was the murder of one Hausmann, a young pedlar. Not for the sake of his money, for he was poor enough, but for his hair and teeth." (I shuddered, but said nothing. He continued :) "This was by no means their first crime. They were discovered to have been driving their horrible trade for two or three years past. It is supposed that they murdered upwards of twenty persons, men, women, and children. Numbers who disappeared mysteriously are now said to have been made away with by the sisters Strauss. Their victims were all strangers or friendless, to whom they offered hospitality, and touching whose disappearance no inquiries were likely to be made. Some few had money, perhaps; the generality were poor; but several watches and a considerable sum of money were found secreted in the house."

"It had a garden," I said, as though I saw it all again—"a garden walled round, with a postern at the further end. In the house were three rooms."

"Just so. All the world has been visiting that house during the last few days. A great number of skeletons have been found in the garden. The popular execration was so great that it was feared the women would be torn in pieces on their way to the "galgen" (gal-lows) to-day. Had it not been for the strong guard which I commanded, and that their terrible sentence—one rarely pronounced now—would, it was known, be carried out to the very letter, they would assuredly have fallen a prey to the fury of the mob. As it was, the savage satisfaction at the prospect of seeing them broken on the wheel—"

"Broken on the wheel! Good Heaven, sir, you surely don't mean that this sentence was carried out?"

"Yes. It is, as I have said, very unusual, now, for this punishment to be even recorded, still less enforced. But in cases of very rare atrocity, nothing short of it seems to satisfy the

public.* I saw even women, to-day, looking on unmoved; though I, a soldier, who have seen a good many bloody battle-fields in the great war, would fain have ridden away when I heard the first crush of the elder sister's arms. It was horrible to hear—and then her cries! You know how it is done? The head is held down by two men, by a rope tied round the neck. The limbs are then broken, one after another, from above, by a heavy wheel. At the end, the head is severed from the body by a sword. The elder sister's agony was prolonged to the very end. I suspect the executioners were more merciful to the younger sister. It is known that they sometimes contrive to strangle the culprit while holding the head down. The younger, after the first sharp cry, never uttered another. She had ceased to suffer, I hope and believe, long before she was beheaded."

Some minutes elapsed before I could speak. I opened my sketch-book, and turned over its pages.

"Sir," I said at last, "I have one question more to ask you. Do these heads at all resemble the wretched women whose death you this day witnessed?"

"Assuredly they do. They must have been drawn from life," he replied.

I then told him my story, as I have now told it you. I need hardly say he did not doubt but that I had actually, in the flesh, encountered the sisters Strauss, and had been in such imminent peril as very few men have survived. As to the hypothesis of a dream, which had taken such firm root in my mind that I could not lightly discard it, the officer laughed it to scorn.

Yet even at this distance of time, when I read and hear strange stories of second-sight, of prophetic dreams, and warning visions, a doubt crosses my mind, and I ask myself whether my adventure with the two sisters of Cologne was not, perhaps, of the nature of these? But you now know as much as I do, and I leave you to decide the point for yourself.

* The wheel was absolutely abolished in Prussia about thirty years ago.

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